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ABSTRACT

The study examined early tuition-guarantee programs for disadvantaged students to determine their characteristics, key issues, and effectiveness. The study found four different types of programs: (1) sponsorship programs in which one individual or organization provides intensive academic help, mentoring, and other services to a small, broad-based group of students; (2) "last-dollar" programs which guarantee students the remaining assistance needed to attend postsecondary school after all other sources of assistance have been exhausted; (3) university-based programs which guarantee admission and tuition at a particular institution and also offer services while students complete high school; (4) "pay-for-grades" programs in which a donor provides few services but puts modest funds, based on students' grades, into accounts for use later in paying higher education expenses. The study showed that in 1988-89 at least 42,496 students were involved in tuition guarantee programs with 2,884 students now receiving postsecondary education tuition benefits. The report found a lack of data concerning program effectiveness. Appended are suggestions for evaluation data collection and design. (DB)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate

June 1988

PROMISING PRACTICE

Private Programs Guaranteeing Student Aid for Higher Education

HE 023 796

GAO

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Program Evaluation and
Methodology Division

B-238753

June 22, 1990

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In recent years, various individuals and private-sector organizations have established new guaranteed student aid and support programs to help disadvantaged students. At your request, we examined these programs to determine their characteristics, the key issues facing them—and likely to face others considering starting similar efforts—and their results so far. The programs are not federally funded, but they do provide an important perspective on federal efforts to increase access to postsecondary education.

As requested by officials in many of the programs we studied, and as agreed with the Committee, we do not identify responses from specific programs. We did, however, find officials in participating programs to be most helpful during the course of our evaluation. As agreed with the Committee, we did not obtain official agency comments or comments from the programs.

As we arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution of it until 30 days from the date of the report. At that time, copies will be sent to the Department of Education and others who are interested and will be made available to others who request them.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call me at (202) 275-1854 or Kwai-Cheung Chan, Director of Program Evaluation in Human Services Areas, at (202) 275-1370. Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,

Eleanor Chelimsky
Assistant Comptroller General

Executive Summary

Purpose

Minority youth continue to enroll in higher education at rates that are lower than those for white students. Minority young people, often from poor families, may be uncertain about how to pay for higher education; may be poorly prepared in high school; may not fully understand the link between higher education, jobs, and earnings; or may rely on alternative paths to income. To change these patterns, private individuals and organizations started programs in the 1980's that offer disadvantaged students early notice of guaranteed financial aid for college and, often, additional academic and other support in preparation for further education. Early positive reports on a few programs drew wide attention but little formal evaluation.

The Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources asked GAO to review the current tuition-guarantee programs to determine their characteristics, the key issues facing them—and likely to face others considering starting similar efforts—and their results so far.

Background

Effective ways to increase the rates of high school graduation and college attendance remain elusive. Academic preparation for college requires selection of particular classes as early as ninth grade; school completion requires persistence in the face of many obstacles, sometimes including peer pressure against academic effort; and college attendance requires surmounting yet additional hurdles, such as completing complex applications and paying the bills. Diverse public and private organizations work to increase the high school graduation and college attendance rates of poor and minority youth in many ways (for example, through tutoring or scholarships). In addition, such targeted federal programs as student financial aid and Upward Bound have been in existence for many years.

Some, though not all, of the guaranteed-tuition programs of the 1980's differ from earlier programs in that they constitute comprehensive efforts, starting early in the school career, to increase the chances of academic success for disadvantaged youths. These new programs combine a financial aid guarantee, personal and often intense mentoring, and a wide range of program elements aimed at increasing both motivation and academic skills so that school success would come to be both valued and feasible.

Results in Brief

GAO found the private sector programs promising because of their participants' significant efforts, the generally plausible program designs,

and some early indications of results. Thus, it would be reasonable for others to make further attempts along these lines. But what about the questions of whether tuition-guarantee programs increase the access of disadvantaged students to higher education and which of several different models of such programs are most cost-effective in improving educational motivation and accomplishments for these students? GAO found that only modest data are being kept and evaluation efforts are uncertain. If this situation does not change, the answers to these questions about the effectiveness of tuition-guarantee programs will not be known.

GAO found four quite different types of programs that represent different strategies concerning how early the intervention should start, what type and size of student participant group should be formed, how strong the financial incentive should be, and how intensive project services should be. The most comprehensive are typically "sponsorship" programs, in which one individual or organizational donor starts to provide intensive academic help, mentoring (personal support), and other services to a small, broad-based (that is, not selected based on prior academic performance) group of students. The least intense are typically "pay-for-grades" programs, in which a donor provides few services but puts modest funds, based on students' grades, into accounts for use later in paying higher-education expenses.

These programs are new. They presently reach only a tiny fraction of the nation's disadvantaged students. However, some of them appear to be achieving an important success in keeping the selected student groups intact and in school. This is a critical precondition for any other effects. Some program components—especially the early intervention, personal mentoring, and intensive academic help in "sponsorship" programs—seem to have the potential to markedly increase motivation and achievement.

Principal Findings

GAO's survey data show that in 1988-89 at least 42,496 students now in school were involved in tuition-guarantee programs. At least 2,884 additional students now in postsecondary education received a total of $1.6 million in tuition benefits. Thirty-nine programs reported a total endowment of $22.7 million to support future tuition payments. GAO found major differences across four types of programs, including the number of students involved, the extent of services offered, and annual operating expenses.

Program Differences

"Sponsorship" programs were the most common of the tuition-guarantee programs, begun either by individuals or organizations. The founder typically selects one or two complete classrooms of students at elementary or junior high school level, guarantees postsecondary tuition, and usually agrees to serve as personal mentor for the young people through the school years and to pay for support staff and related programming. These programs provide the most intensive educational services to the participating precollege students of the four program types. In 1988-89, 37 sponsorship programs responding to GAO's survey (a rate of 53 percent) served 3,617 students at an average cost per year of $923 per student. Few have graduated students or paid out guaranteed tuition yet. However, most do report success in retaining their students in school thus far. GAO also saw examples of substantial extra academic help for students that could make a big difference.

"Last-dollar" programs help high school juniors and seniors learn about and apply for student aid, and also guarantee students the remaining assistance (the last dollars) needed to attend postsecondary school after all other sources of assistance have been exhausted. Staff of twelve last-dollar programs responding to our survey (a rate of 92 percent) reported that in 1988-89 they advised nearly 17,000 students at an average cost per year of $431 per student, and also paid out $1.54 million in grants to 2,389 students now in higher education. They offer few other supportive services. Several have been in operation for some years and have helped many students, but lack evidence (other than participants' opinions) of the unique impact of these efforts.

"University-based" programs may guarantee admissions and tuition at a particular institution and also offer mentoring and other services while selected or volunteer students complete high school. A few universities operate sponsorship programs to help a selected group through high school and then guarantee tuition at any institution after graduation. In 1988-89, 16 university-based programs responded to GAO's survey (a rate of 67 percent), and their staff reported serving almost 1,900 students with average annual expenses of $328. None of these programs has begun giving tuition benefits to graduates, but the programs generally reported success in retaining students in school.

"Pay-for-grades" programs are the fourth type of tuition-guarantee program. In these, the tuition funds are guaranteed only if a student receives specified grades in school subjects. Staff from four of these programs (a 100 percent response rate) reported that in 1988-89 nearly 20,000 students received these rewards (payment into an account set

aside for future tuition), together with relatively few support services, so that the average cost was only $111 per student. Because of the modest incentive they offered and (in some cases) the large percentage of nonwinners, such programs appeared least likely to affect disadvantaged youths' college attendance rates. Nevertheless, pay-for-grades programs reported paying out funds totaling $73,000 to nearly 500 high-school graduates in 1988-89.

Implementation Problems

Current program staff predicted that others attempting such programs would most often encounter problems finding funds to pay for current services, to hire staff, and to fund the tuition guarantees. In addition, they warned that maintaining contact with students was difficult. Sponsorship program staff often cited minimal cooperation or even resistance from family members as a barrier, though GAO noted that parents may reasonably resent the intrusion and competition that strong mentors may represent to a family.

Evaluation Shortcomings

GAO found some negative attitudes concerning the merits of systematic evaluation, especially of the more complex sponsorship programs. Respondents from most programs did report collecting some data, including students' school progress and grades. Data collection seems to be lagging or absent, however, on other key items, such as test scores, school attendance, family information, and the support services used by students. The programs' current data-collection efforts do not appear to constitute comprehensive, systematic evaluations. GAO judges such evaluation to be essential and suggests the need for a comparison-group design. Until evidence from such evaluations is available, conclusions about the effectiveness of tuition-guarantee programs will continue to be tentative and qualified.

Recommendations

This report contains no recommendations.

Agency Comments

GAO did not request formal comments on a draft of this report.

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Abbreviations

GAO General Accounting Office
IHAD I Have a Dream

Introduction

The nation needs more and more workers with advanced education to spur economic growth and improve productivity, and individuals need more and more education to command high wages. Nevertheless, despite steady gains in rates of high school graduation, rates of attainment in higher education are only slowly rising, and minority attainment lags behind that of whites. In 1988, forty-five percent of young white individuals had completed a year of college, while only 33 percent of blacks in the same age group (25-34) had done so; about 25 percent of young whites had completed 4 years of college, but only 13 percent of blacks in the same age group had done so.[1] Differences by income are also dramatic: studies tracing the high school class of 1980 found that among the brightest students, those with low family income were 20 to 25 percent less likely than their wealthier classmates to attend college, and within the average ability group, the lower-income students were 40 percent less likely to go on to college. Thus, to some young people, especially those in city schools, higher education may seem far out of reach: they may know few who went that far in school; they may be poorly prepared academically; and they may be uncertain about how to finance higher education.

Beginning in the 1980's, several hundred programs initiated from outside the schools have attempted to change these prevailing patterns by going beyond familiar scholarship programs and providing a combination of guaranteed financial aid and other kinds of help. Individuals have sponsored whole classes of students beginning early in their school careers. For example, New York businessman Eugene Lang established the I Have a Dream (IHAD) program that offered a group of sixth graders a tuition guarantee and close supportive help through the rest of their school years. Business groups raised funds for financial aid counseling and tuition aid. Individual universities began working with recruited students at an early age and offered eventual full tuition benefits to those who would devote themselves to serious preparatory studies. The programs appear to have varied widely in their analyses of what young

[1]With regard to long-term trends, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that the share of whites enrolled in higher education declined in the first half of the 1970's, then held steady until it increased through the 1980's. The proportion of black and Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in higher education increased also in the early 1970's but declined in the second half of the decade. By the mid-1980's, the rates for both groups were above those of the early 1970's. Throughout the period, participation rates of blacks and Hispanics were consistently lower than those of whites, a steady gap neither narrowing nor widening. Concerning college completions, a gap is widening as recent growth in the young adult population (ages 18 to 34) outpaced degree growth to a much larger extent among blacks than among whites. The black young adult population grew 24 percent between 1977 and 1985, but the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to blacks fell by 2 percent; in contrast, the white young adult population increased 9 percent, while the number of bachelors' degrees increased 3 percent.

people needed and in the resources brought to bear on the problems.[2] However, early reports, such as those from Eugene Lang about his IHAD program, have been encouraging in the areas of improved school completion and college-going rates for students who receive such comprehensive assistance.

Since one major goal of federal higher education policy has been to increase access, it is of great importance to learn whether tuition-guarantee programs are also doing so, in order that they can be adopted widely and thus influence future federal programs.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources asked us to report on tuition-guarantee programs.[3] As agreed with the Committee, we concentrated chiefly on programs initiated in the private sector so that our review would provide perspective on federal efforts to improve access to postsecondary education. We asked several main questions:

- What are the characteristics of the programs?
- What are the key issues facing the programs now and likely to face others starting similar programs in the future?
- What have been the programs' results so far? If evaluation is premature at this point, are data being gathered that will permit future evaluation?

This review represents a somewhat different approach, as we needed to examine a set of programs where data on results are not yet available for evaluation. Such early examination is warranted, however, in areas of acute national concern. The goal is not to judge outcomes but to locate and describe practices that appear soundly designed and worthy of wider trial and to attempt, insofar as is possible, to assure their eventual

[2]In chapter 2, we discuss the assumptions underlying the design of some programs about causes of low enrollment of poor and minority youth in higher education. There have been efforts to analyze the scientific literature for explanations. For example, reviewing the decline in black high school graduates' college enrollment since the mid-1970's, the National Academy of Sciences examined evidence for five alternative explanations and concluded that a "decline in financial aid is the most important factor," though "increases in military enlistment may also be important." See Gerald D. Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr. (eds.), A Common Destiny: Blacks in American Society (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989), pp. 338-345.

[3]By agreement with the Committee, we did not include one type of program that involves a different use of the term "guarantee." These are tuition prepayment plans aimed primarily at middle-income families able to save for college. In such plans, as established by a number of individual schools and state systems in recent years, a parent pays tuition now for a youngster who will attend college some years in the future. The parent is guaranteed that the amount paid will cover the school's full cost at a later date. These programs are described in the 1989 Survey of College Savings and Guaranteed Tuition Plans (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1989). See also Janet S. Hansen (ed.), College Savings Plans: Public Policy Choices (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1990).

evaluation. We had a similar goal in our earlier review of AIDS education programs.[4]

The Programs We Studied

We attempted to gather data on all private sector tuition-guarantee programs.[5] We initially searched bibliographic data bases but found neither analyses nor lists of such programs. We then developed our own comprehensive directory.[6] Beginning in December 1988, we looked for any current program that aimed to increase school motivation and completion by guaranteeing minority and disadvantaged students, prior to their senior year, some or all of the funds needed for post-high-school education, together with some supportive services. Starting with those tuition-guarantee programs identified through a national search of newspaper and magazine stories, we telephoned each program to establish its relevance to our purpose and to learn of others. When we stopped our search in July 1989, we had located 124 programs. In addition, because the number of such programs is growing and there is no central source of information about them, the number we did not survey is unknown. However, we estimate there may be as many as 120 tuition-guarantee programs in this latter category.[7]

By analyzing these 124 programs located nationwide, we identified four types:

[4]U.S. General Accounting Office, AIDS Education: Reaching Populations at Higher Risk, GAO/PEMD-88-35 (Washington, D.C.: September 1988).

[5]We learned of two related public efforts, neither of which was in full operation during the period of our study. Crediting as its model the I Have a Dream projects, beginning in the 1991-92 school year, New York state will expand its student aid package with a new grant program (called Liberty Scholarships) covering non-tuition costs of higher education. An additional program called Liberty Partnerships, started in 1989-90, enables schools and colleges to apply for competitive state grants for mentoring, counseling, and dropout prevention efforts. Rhode Island has announced a tuition-guarantee program that will be aimed at all 3,000 low-income third-grade students in the state. Called the Children's Crusade, it will be started as soon as endowment funds are raised.

[6]Many individuals we contacted expressed interest in learning of other similar programs. In response, we prepared a directory of projects, including 61 that answered our survey and asked to be listed. Copies are available from the Program Evaluation and Methodology Division of GAO.

[7]Several types of programs have sites throughout the country. The Merrill Lynch Corporation ScholarshipBuilder 2000 program, established in collaboration with the Urban League affiliates in 10 cities, and the Ohio State University Young Scholar program, which has students in 9 Ohio cities, identified all of their sites for us. Another major program, the I Have a Dream Foundation, which includes about 130 sites, refused to identify their locations. Working independently, we could locate only 47 of the latter. We may have missed 10-12 of each of the other three program types, for an estimated total not included in our universe of about 120.

- "sponsorship," in which an individual or organization selects one or more classes of students (or sometimes individuals) at the elementary or junior high level, guaranteeing postsecondary tuition and, in the case of individual sponsors, usually agreeing to serve personally as a mentor (or, in the case of organizations, arranging for something similar) through the school years and to pay for support staff and services as well;
- "last-dollar," in which students in high school are promised help in applying for other student aid and are guaranteed the "last dollar" of aid needed to attend postsecondary school;
- "university-based," in which a specific university develops a program with elements such as tutoring or other educational support, personal mentoring, school-year and summer enrichment experiences, with the tuition guarantee usable at that institution alone or, in some cases, at any institution the student chooses; and
- "pay-for-grades," in which the tuition funds are earned if a student receives specific grades in high school subjects, are placed in a special account during the school years, and are paid out in increments after graduation.

The Methods We Used

Evaluating a new concept or approach in its early stages to determine if it holds wider promise poses special methodological challenges. These general challenges and our solutions to them in this particular study are summarized in table 1.1. There are three major dilemmas: first, determining cause and effect, though always challenging, is especially difficult in evaluations of programs that are still developing and changing; second, as evaluators we could not count on having needed data or even basic records, since resources of young programs such as these are typically scarce and concentrated on services; and third, especially in this case, key outcomes—such as high school graduation and college enrollment and graduation—will not be known for many years.

Table 1.1: Methodological Challenges in Evaluating Tuition-Guarantee Programs

Challenge	What we did
Programs' early developmental stage means change is constant, but evaluation of potential requires a fairly stable description of the program	Excluded those just starting; surveyed all programs nationwide, not just a sample (in order not to miss any with significant experience); visited the most stable examples we could find; capitalized on programs' developmental stage by asking practitioners for their own analyses of barriers others would face in starting similar efforts
Resources are likely to be concentrated on service rather than data collection	Compared programs' assumptions to determine stronger and weaker conceptual bases; gathered data from observation, in addition to mail survey responses; examined programs' current data and evaluation plans
Key outcomes will not be known for years	Examined intermediate outcomes, where possible, in individual programs; aggregated outcome observation data by type of program for stronger inference

We were able to help move the discussion of what can be learned from these programs beyond the stage of anecdote and self-report by providing consistent data from our national survey to describe and compare programs on many dimensions, as well as independent first-hand observations of programs in practice. These two kinds of data address important questions pertinent to replication and expansion: (1) results and costs to date, (2) the future data base that may exist for documenting success and understanding its origins, (3) unresolved issues facing the programs, and (4) barriers to expansion.

Our analysis of programs in clusters that share key attributes is also a step towards stronger inferences than are possible from single-program press or sponsor accounts. Such accounts may stress results that are properly attributable not to the general program features but to unique conditions; conclusions based on data from multiple programs, and from two separate sources (surveys and visits), are preferable. Data from independent observations by our site visitors help add perspective to the natural enthusiasm program developers typically show in describing their efforts.

The Data We Gathered

As noted, we used two methods to reach our objective of describing tuition-guarantee programs. First, to obtain comparable data on basic questions across the group, we developed a questionnaire that we mailed in August 1989 to each tuition-guarantee program we identified. This survey included 62 questions covering program goals, initial selection of

students and student characteristics, progress through school by the student group (including attrition), sponsors and their contributions, staff, extent and conditions of the tuition guarantee, support services for students, summer program, annual expenses, endowment for the tuition guarantee, and evaluation. Most specific questions asked for information about the school year 1988-89. In open-ended questions, we asked respondents to discuss factors encouraging and hindering success. We tested the questionnaire with staff of different kinds of programs to be sure it would allow them all to describe their work satisfactorily.

After a second mailing of the questionnaire, a reminder postcard, and at least two telephone contacts with nonrespondents, we received 69 usable responses, for a response rate of 62 percent. Table 1.2 shows how many programs of each type we identified and the percentage of survey responses we received from each.

Table 1.2: Tuition-Guarantee Programs by Type and Response to Our Survey[a]

Program type	Programs identified	Survey responses	
		Number	Percent
Sponsorship	70	37	53
Last-dollar	13	12	92
University-based	24	16	67
Pay-for-grades	4	4	100
Total	**111**	**69**	**62%**

[a]This does not include 13 programs originally identified but later determined through the survey or further contact either not to be actively serving students in 1988-89 (that is, just starting or terminated) or not a tuition-guarantee program according to our definition.

Second, we selected six tuition-guarantee programs to serve as case examples of different approaches and in late spring 1989 visited each of them with a two-person team for up to a week, to gather data. We chose programs that had been in existence for several years so that we could find out about their growth and development over time and their impacts on students. Because of the rapid growth of the sponsorship type of program (including those affiliated with or modeled after Eugene Lang's IHAD program in New York City), we visited three of them, and one example of each of the other three types. There are university-based programs at both public and private schools; in one exception to our general focus on private-sector efforts, we chose a major state university to visit to observe an especially extensive example of this type of program. Table 1.3 shows characteristics of the six programs we visited.

Table 1.3: Characteristics of Tuition-Guarantee Programs We Visited

Site	Program type	Year established	Location	Number of students[a]	Sponsor
A	Sponsorship	1987	Northeast	104	Individual
B	Sponsorship	1986	Southwest	1,900	Multiple individuals
C	Sponsorship	1988	Mid-Atlantic	35	National corporation
D	Last-dollar	1985	Northeast	3,000	Business group
E	University-based	1988	North central	600	State university
F	Pay-for-grades	1987	Mid-Atlantic	102	Local corporation

[a]Number of students participating at the time of our visit in 1989. In the last-dollar program, participants include all those receiving any type of financial aid counseling, not only those receiving aid; in the pay-for-grades program, participants include only those winning the tuition benefits, not all those eligible.

For each program, we visited schools and community organizations and observed regular activities of students and staff wherever possible. We reviewed records and also interviewed students, parents, staff, sponsors, and pertinent officials (such as public school educators, community leaders, or university administrators).[8] The visits provided detailed examples of topics covered in the survey, including programs' goals, resources, staffing, services, links to schools, successes and concerns, and plans for evaluation. In addition, interviews with a range of participants at each site gave us multiple perspectives concerning controversial subjects. In all, we visited 11 schools and interviewed 93 people.

How We Analyzed the Data

We reviewed all the survey responses and first eliminated those from programs that were not currently operating or that did not involve some type of early notice of a tuition guarantee. (Our scope excluded traditional scholarship programs, for example.) We checked each survey for internal consistency and clarified confusing answers by follow-up telephone calls. We then categorized each program as one of the four types and did standard statistical analyses of the answers of all programs of each type.[9] We chiefly used the mean, or average, when we judged it to be an accurate representation of the answers from all those in a group of

[8]Because of the extensive nature of our visits (for up to a week, with additional visits in some cases for follow-up data gathering) to central and field offices of private-sector programs not involved with federal law, regulation, or funds, we were especially grateful for the cooperation we received.

[9]Most categorizations were unambiguous. The only exceptions were a few cases in which a sponsor gave a sizable fund to a university to manage, and the resulting program appeared much like the rest of the sponsorship efforts we found (for example, with a guarantee of tuition anywhere). Because of the special involvement of faculty and administration of universities in these, however, we retained them in the university-based category, along with other university programs that guaranteed tuition at a single school.

programs, except in a few situations where one or two programs very unlike the others distorted the picture given by the mean. For example, one citywide pay-for-grades program had 29,000 eligible students, while others affected only one classroom or school. One sponsorship program had 1,900 students, though most others have around 100. In those situations in the text where an average would be misleading, we report the median, which describes the midpoint of all answers and avoids distortion by a few outliers.

We analyzed the site visit data in several ways. We compared the survey data to the visit observations and looked for both corroboration and contrasts. A staff member who had not visited sites performed the computer analyses of the survey data and prepared conclusions that seemed to flow from the data, without being influenced by the vivid on-site details. Another staff member then joined in the further work with survey data, drawing illustrations from the case material for some analyses and directing additional survey analyses as needed. In addition, we reviewed the site visit data to determine important themes and issues that we had seen at several sites but which had not appeared in the survey.

External Advisory Panel

We reviewed our plans, questionnaire, and results with an external advisory panel of experts knowledgeable about the programs and their evaluation. Their names are listed in appendix I.

We did not request formal comments on our report from the programs involved or from any federal agency. Our work was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Study Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

This is the first study to report on the full range of private-sector tuition-guarantee programs using diverse kinds of data, systematically gathered. We made extensive efforts to locate all programs to send them our questionnaire, to present questions that had been tested on similar people, and to stimulate responses from as many programs as possible. We made first-hand observations of programs exemplifying the major

different approaches and discussed their operations with a wide range of participants.

Limitations

One limitation of our data is that we could not locate all sponsorship programs to survey. Specifically, we did not have a full list of programs affiliated with the national IHAD Foundation, although we made repeated efforts to obtain such a list. We located 47, but there may be as many as 85 more. We probably missed some programs of other types as well, but we have no way of estimating the number as precisely as in the IHAD case.

Another limitation is the fact that the response rates to our survey were lower than we had hoped. For some types of programs, the response rate was acceptable, as table 1.2 shows. However, we had the lowest response (53 percent) from sponsorship programs; we cannot estimate whether the group that answered is a biased sample (that is, systematically different from the full group we wanted to know about). Nevertheless, we can describe the 37 sponsorship programs that did respond, and we also gathered further detailed data on this type of program in three case studies.

Organization of the Report

In chapter 2, we answer the first evaluation question concerning programs' characteristics by presenting each of the four program types, including their assumptions about students' needs and how to meet them, as well as our data on the programs in practice. Chapter 3 answers the second evaluation question on key issues that face the programs and that might be faced by others starting similar programs. In chapter 4, we answer the third question, concerning results to date, with programs' self-reported data from the survey on student retention and observations of individual programs' outcomes from the case study sites. In that chapter, we also address the likelihood-of-evaluation issue with information from the survey on data being collected and evaluations planned, and we suggest its importance in a discussion of the potential returns to the programs' investment in young people. Chapter 5 summarizes the study findings, draws overall conclusions, and highlights the importance of evaluation. Appendix II gives concrete suggestions for improved evaluation on the part of tuition-guarantee programs.

Chapter 2

Four Types of Tuition-Guarantee Programs

Our national survey showed a very wide range of different efforts now under way that share the core idea of increasing incentives by guaranteeing postsecondary education funds to young people. If a tuition guarantee were enough, however, to change disadvantaged youths' aspirations, motivation, and achievement, the programs discussed here could be simple and the enormous press, TV, and public attention to the phenomenon would be unlikely. In fact, program sponsors believe much more is needed and, accordingly, their efforts are varied and complex, and include the rich human interest drama of philanthropists, universities, and corporations not only promising to make higher education possible for urban school classes but also devoting years of close attention to trying to assure the groups' progress.

This chapter presents the results of our national survey of tuition-guarantee programs, which was designed to answer the initial evaluation question about the current characteristics of such programs. We begin by discussing the major assumptions that seem to underlie the programs.

The Programs' Underlying Assumptions

Tuition-guarantee programs, like other new action programs, are guided by some key ideas or central beliefs, and we found that these vary across the types of programs. They do share the general notion that the price of higher education is a significant barrier to increased enrollment by disadvantaged students. Thus, by definition, all tuition-guarantee programs promise to provide funds for higher education that need not be repaid and that form a subsidy to reduce the price a student must pay. Presumably, all the programs' designers expect that if students know early that cost will be reduced or eliminated as a barrier, they will be more enthusiastic about their chances of going to college. Sponsors further hope students will, with that more accessible goal now in mind, devote more time to studies that otherwise would have had less likelihood of paying off, and be more willing to forgo the short-term income from work during the period of extended schooling in expectation of higher long-term income and more satisfying work.

Programs differ in their views of how unconditionally to guarantee the tuition grant, and the setting of conditions is related to particular assumptions about behavior. Pay-for-grades programs offer the most obvious conditional gift and the most concrete indicators used: students can earn the tuition funds only upon receiving specified grades on their report card. Some (though not all) university-based programs may select students for their tuition guarantee who show early promise of eventual

success at the institution, and then require the students to meet additional requirements (courses to be taken or average grades earned, for example) along the way. Such programs, together with pay-for-grades programs, thus require students to show that they are "worthy" of investment, a concept somewhat analogous to the concept in welfare policy of the "deserving" poor.

On the other hand, sponsorship program founders and staff tend to believe strongly in the potential of every young person; thus, they typically promise the funds for higher education to a chosen group simply on graduation (or even completion of the general equivalency certificate) without requiring a particular grade average or other measures of academic potential or accomplishment.[1] Last-dollar programs likewise offer generalized encouragement to all students, but these programs differ from sponsorship programs in that funds are given only after high school graduation and then only to those with financial need after colleges have made aid offers. However, despite their differences, many of the sponsorship, university-based, and last-dollar programs share a similar assumption about the viability and importance of educational investment for all students.

But, as we repeatedly heard from people involved in these programs, "the financial guarantee is only a small part" of the programs' analyses of what disadvantaged students need and what should be done to expand students' horizons and change their approach to school.

Sponsorship Programs

These programs' designers appear to view the young persons' whole lives as being at risk, often on account of the disadvantaged community or neighborhood where the students' school is located. Accordingly, sponsorship programs may aim to supply the emotional support and total involvement of a substitute or added parent, together with a supportive small group of other young people undergoing similar changes of outlook, and bolstered by a wide range of services. The implication is that the types of support students need to get to college—academic, emotional, financial—are needed early but are not available in their immediate communities, and that strong external intervention can raise

[1]Though few programs have yet faced the complex problems of administering the guarantee, program officials told us that they expect students will apply for all types of federal and state student aid when the time comes. Since the students in most tuition-guarantee programs are typically very low-income, they may be eligible for many kinds of government and institutional aid, so that the programs' own guarantee may be one of the smaller contributions to the overall funding of the students' higher educations.

the expectations of those around the young person both at home and school. In their strongest form, such programs aim to radically restructure, from a relatively early point, the forces affecting poor children's lives.

Last-Dollar Programs

These programs, on the other hand, by working with seniors about to graduate, can take more for granted about students' readiness for higher education, motivation, and level of accomplishment, and thus can narrow their area of concern and intervention. Such programs' advocates believe that for those who have survived and acceded to the last two years of high school, financial aid is the key to further education. Last-dollar programs therefore devote their efforts to technical information and help with details of college costs, payment plans, expense budgets, aid applications, and related matters. Once students find all the available aid, the program adds marginal dollars at the end from its own resources (based on formulas that typically leave some degree of a "self-help" burden, including work and loans).

University-Based Programs

These designs may range from something very like the sponsorship model (for example, in the case of a donor who initially gives a fund to a particular university to guarantee tuition for a selected group from the area, but that is to be used eventually to guarantee tuition anywhere), to a guarantee to selected students in selected cities in one state that is usable only at a particular university campus. The assumptions about what students need in order to succeed may vary from the broadest assessment and most comprehensive services to little more than the guarantee alone. Programs with guarantees limited to a specific university campus may also reflect past problems of student adaptation, and may therefore stress activities to familiarize students with specific campus facilities and locations, academic demands, and student culture to help assure that students who eventually attend are ready to do their best and do not have to endure unnecessary shocks or surprises.

Pay-For-Grades Programs

Such programs seem to reflect a central assumption that schools' current rewards are seen by too many students as inadequate to stimulate their best academic efforts. The further assumption is that the addition of a tuition-fund incentive—along with any gifts, public recognition, and other rewards (such as contact with mentors) that the winners

Table 2.1: Programs' Main Assumptions

Program type	Tuition-guarantee assumptions
Sponsorship	A wide range of young students (and their parents and teachers) can develop higher expectations by being guaranteed tuition, which will be available to all those sponsored in a selected but heterogeneous group who can meet entrance requirements (high school graduation or GED) for higher education
Last-dollar	Small awards can help make higher education possible, or enrich students' options, when awarded to needy graduating seniors after all other aid possibilities have been tapped
University-based	Depends on nature of program; single school programs assume motivation can be raised by guaranteeing tuition at one university to those selected as having promise of success at that institution
Pay-for-grades	Grades are a useful measure of both performance and potential and therefore can justify decisions on education investment in individuals; also, motivation for education can be raised by adding funds toward tuition as a reward for those attaining specified grades or an overall average

receive—will draw more individual efforts from the larger group of students who hope thereby to win, even though the payoff goes only to those who achieve.

Programs that add new rewards, with no other changes, rest on the additional assumption that the academic evaluation process is viewed as legitimate. Raising the stakes on school performance, however, may put a new spotlight on issues such as the fairness of grading. Such programs face the further challenge of assessing how far the available funds can be spread under different payoff conditions, and the short- and long-term effects on students of having many or few winners. For example, large awards might stimulate the greatest effort, but limited resources mean big rewards can be given to only a few (that is, most people will not win). This may depress effort in later groups when they learn of the early payoff history.

Other obstacles	Intervention assumptions
Multiple problems of youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods	Students' aspirations, self-esteem, and confidence about their chances of success can be enhanced by providing unqualified support from an additional parent figure, along with extensive services and a supportive group of other young people going through similar changes
Problem of lack of knowledge of student-aid procedures among disadvantaged applicants	Technical help in aggressive search for aid will yield almost enough aid to support higher education
Individual university problems with recruitment and retention	A tailored program will reach students from underrepresented groups and areas, and specific activities will enhance the students' chances of success at that institution
General problems of low expectations and aspirations among disadvantaged students	Enrichment experiences and mentoring will further enhance motivation when provided to those who emerge as winners in the grade contest

Pay-for-grades programs open to large groups (an entire school or district) cannot, by their nature, embrace a theory of complex student needs that require services to be met. A school or district may provide academic help separately, but the tuition-guarantee programs do not include integral supportive help for all, though it may be offered to the winners—arguably those least in need—as part of their reward.

Table 2.1 summarizes the programs' assumptions about the potential effects of an early guarantee of help with college tuition, as well as assumptions about other ways the programs intervene to help disadvantaged young people.

The Programs' Hopeful Philosophy

Most generally, the programs aim to rekindle a faith in education and a broader hope for the future among disadvantaged students and their families. The programs' names convey the designers' aspirations for the young people: I Have a Dream, with its evocation of Dr. Martin Luther King; Young Scholars (6th graders chosen by Ohio State University); ScholarshipBuilder 2000 (the Merrill Lynch Corporation's collaboration with the Urban League, involving 1988-89 first graders who will graduate from high school in the year 2000); and others, including Tell Them We Are Rising, I Know I Can, Say Yes to Education, Passport to Success, and College Opportunity Program 1995. All the programs, whatever their titles, rest on a basic finding from research that gives them plausibility. This finding is that the ideals that students, their parents, and their peers cherish are more important than a student's socioeconomic and ethnic background in predicting academic success.[2]

Major Differences Among the Programs

To summarize the detailed information that will be presented in the rest of the chapter, our survey showed many specific differences in practice across and to some degree even within the four types of programs. That is, they differ on the key common dimensions of financial incentives and supportive services. For example, the basic dollar incentive ranges from four years' full tuition to much less. In addition, programs' services vary, as shown by the range of cost per student from $111 to $923 per year and by the range of intensity of adult presence from 1:526 to 1:14. Sponsorship programs offer the greatest tuition incentive and the most extensive supportive services. At the other extreme, pay-for-grades programs offer both smaller financial incentives and fewer services. Last-dollar and university-based programs vary considerably among themselves but can be characterized generally as falling somewhere in a middle ground between the other two types, with relatively sizable financial incentives but lesser degrees of supportive services. Table 2.2 summarizes these major differences on the two key dimensions. Since the programs represent such varying scales of intervention, it will be of great interest to trace the long-term effects, and hence the cost-effectiveness, of each. It seems reasonable to expect that although the programs have a common plausible starting point in seeking changes in students' outlooks on school and life, the programs have very different

[2]U.S. Department of Education, What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 15. It is curious that programs that aim to persuade young people that individual effort is consequential and that perseverance will pay off, sometimes select groups for services and the educational benefit in a manner that may appear inexplicable and random to the recipients; this could reinforce a fatalistic view that success is mysterious, which is quite the opposite of the instrumental outlook desired.

chances of actually changing students' lives. Table 2.3 summarizes quantitative indicators concerning students, adults, annual expenses, and results so far for each program type. The programs' results will be described in chapter 4; the rest of the data are presented in this chapter.

Table 2.2: Extent of Financial Incentives and Supportive Services Provided by Four Types of Program

Type of program	Extent of financial incentives		Extent of supportive services	
	Stronger	Weaker	More extensive	Less extensive
Sponsorship	X[a]		X	
Last-dollar	X			X
University-based	X			X
Pay-for-grades		X		X

[a]An "X" indicates a program characteristic.

Table 2.3: Summary of Programs on Selected Indicators[a]

Program type	Number responding	Students		Adult-student ratio	Annual spending per student	Results
		Average	Total			
Sponsorship	37	98	**3,617**	1:14	$923	High retention rates
Last-dollar	12	1,544	**16,988**	1:177	$431	Payouts to 2,389; total $1.54 million; average award $797
University-based	16	119	**1,898**	1:18	$328	High retention rates
Pay-for-grades	4	4,998	**19,993[b]**	1:526	$111	Payouts to 495; total $73,000; average awards vary from $138 to $667

[a]All data for 1988-89. Students counted include only those still in school; does not include graduates receiving tuition awards.

[b]Includes only students qualifying for payments.

The Programs in Practice

Sponsorship Programs

Program Structure, Students, and Goals

These programs are the best-known, as a consequence of the publicity given to the New York and other sites of the IHAD group. We located 70 such programs; 37 answered our survey. None began earlier than 1985. We included in this group the Merrill Lynch Corporation's program, which involves 250 students in 10 cities, although it is different in significant ways from the others.

Although 14 of the 37 programs were started by individuals, 16 were started by organizations (10 of the 16 by foundations), and 7 were begun under still other arrangements or agreements. As we found in one of the sites we visited, a community may have no wealthy individual who could begin the program, but a group of individuals may be willing to take on the financial responsibility for a group of students.

Slightly less than half of all programs chose an existing group (one or more classrooms) to be sponsored, typically at a graduation transition somewhere between fourth and eighth grade. The Merrill Lynch program starts even earlier: Urban League and school officials in each of the 10 cities selected one elementary school according to criteria of location, staffing, and program, and then chose individual students entering first grade, rather than an intact class.

Programs typically reported choosing students only once. The initial groups averaged 77 students, most whom were black or Hispanic.[3] Eight sites added students (replacing those who left or adding new groups), and the average size of the groups selected grew to 106 students. In all, the programs answering our survey reported that they had thus far selected (or opened the opportunity to) just over 3,800 students, 3,617 of whom were still enrolled in school in 1988-89.[4] The size of the group served by individual programs in the 1988-89 school year ranged between 14 and 1,786 students.

Nearly all sponsorship programs cited motivating students to finish high school as a main goal. Targeting students as they move from elementary to intermediate and high school is key to these efforts because sponsors hope to reach students before they are "lost" or have begun to lose interest in school. Program sponsors we visited told us that their intent is to continue the sponsorship no matter where the student moves. This raises obvious questions about the feasibility of providing the critical supportive services, or even of tracking individuals in order to deliver the tuition guarantee at the appropriate time. How programs will make good on their promises at a distance has not been widely tested yet since

[3]Thirty-three sites included black students, who typically were 80 percent of those selec[illegible]20 sites reported Hispanic students, in an average proportion of 31 percent. Sixteen sites had white students, an average of 8 percent, and 8 sites reported that 2 percent of their enrollees were of Asian American or Pacific Islander ancestry. Four sites also reported enrolling small numbers of Native American students.

[4]News accounts of the I Have a Dream network of programs cite a total of 9,000 students sponsored in about 130 programs, as of August 1989. See Joseph Berger, "East Harlem Students Clutch a College Dream," New York Times, August 27, 1989, p. 28.

most have operated only 1 to 3 years, with junior high school-aged students in a few schools. One program that sponsored individuals from numerous schools rather than an intact class, and currently has a group spread across a large city, has already reported difficulties.

Asked to indicate key elements essential to the main goal, respondents spoke frequently of academic skill improvement (N=20), cultural activities such as attending plays or visiting places students and their families might not otherwise see (N=19), and providing mentors who could reflect the results of continued persistence with school work (N=17). Together, these types of interventions attempt to help students to be better prepared for the academic rigors and the broader culture of college.

Sponsors, Staff, and Services

Sponsors, either individuals or groups, have multiple roles with regard to their programs. In 29 sites with initial major sponsors, these individuals or organizations provided the basic funding for the tuition guarantee. In 28 cases, the founders reported spending time with participating students. In addition, 26 provided additional funding beyond the tuition guarantee to support services and activities for the students, 25 were involved with planning, and 18 coordinated with schools and other outside organizations. Thus, sponsors in these programs have taken on a variety of roles that transcend making funding available and include more extensive personal involvement with students selected, along with program management and other activities.

The single financial sponsor who also serves as personal mentor to a class of students is not the only model. A notable exception is the Merrill Lynch Corporation's ScholarshipBuilder 2000 program, where the national corporation is providing the guarantee but is also providing funds to, and working with, the Urban League affiliate in each of the 10 cities where a class of youngsters has been selected. Urban League staff will arrange the supportive services by drawing on diverse resources, including staff in local offices of the Merrill Lynch Corporation.

Programs may in some cases have so many different adults in the roles of sponsor, mentor, staff, and volunteers that students may be confused. We observed this potential in one site we visited, which had not found enough wealthy donors to carry through the one-sponsor-one-class design. Help for a single student in this program, for example, could include: tutoring by a shifting set of college volunteers; a tuition guarantee by a local chapter of a national sorority; counseling in school, and recreational and cultural outings, conducted by a paid staff member;

and mentoring by a local business leader who also provided counseling and enrichment activities.

Staffs were modest in size. Programs had both paid and unpaid staff who provided services to students, with a median staff size of 6.[5] The respondents also reported hiring an average of just under two paid management staff. We computed a ratio of adult staff to students (including both paid staff and volunteers) to compare the chances of such contact across the four types of programs; sponsorship projects showed one adult for every 14 students.[6] Fewer than half reported having any clerical staff.

We asked staff to estimate how many days in an average month students received supportive services. Academic assistance was most common and most frequent. Twenty-eight of the 37 programs told us that students received academic assistance, on average, every other school day (just under 10 days a month). One program we visited used the sponsor's private resources to establish a 2-hour after-school program in the students' school three days a week. (The after-school program also included a fourth afternoon of recreational activities at the community organization that administered the program for the sponsor.) The after-school program open to the 84 students was staffed by 12 people: 5 teachers from the regular school faculty, 3 teacher aides, 3 high school student volunteers, a parent who helped with record keeping, and a director from the district's central office. The teachers deliberately grouped the students and repeated and reinforced classroom lessons and helped with homework, using extra materials the program purchased. Test-taking skills were also emphasized and practiced. The program established an extensive agenda of concrete incentives (including clothing, trips, and theater passes) covering all its activities, with special rewards (including two added trips) for those attending the after-school program. This element of the sponsor's program alone cost $45,000 (in salaries and the incentives), or $900 per student for the 50 students (out of a total of 84 in the sponsored group) who voluntarily took part. We calculated that each student who attended regularly (at 6 hours per week, for perhaps 30 weeks) received approximately 180 additional hours of school. This is the equivalent of adding an hour to every school day for the entire year, with teaching delivered in smaller

[5]The average staff size was 30, but this figure is strongly affected by a single project that reported using 655 volunteer staff to assist the 1,955 students selected.

[6]This figure includes part-time volunteers and staff, and thus is not comparable to figures based on counting full-time-equivalent adults, such as schools' teacher-pupil ratios.

groups and with increased rewards for effort. This type of intervention builds on the conclusion from research that the amount of time students are actively engaged in learning strongly affects their achievement.[7]

Programs reported about the same frequency of the second major type of support, contact with a mentor. In 24 programs offering such support, our survey found an average of 9 days of such contact per month.[8] Cultural or recreational activities occurred somewhat less often—about 5 days out of the month (as reported by 30 programs).

Services appear to go to most participating students but only some of their families. Those respondents answering (33 of the 37 programs) estimated that during the 1988-89 school year an average of 103 students, about as many as the total student group in the average program, received support services as a result of being involved in the program. In addition, 28 programs reported that an average of 29 family members of students received services during this same period.

Summer Programs

In 1989, most sponsorship programs (28 of 37) offered summer programs, and an average of 77 students participated. Nine of the 28 offerings were full-time and lasted all summer; 14 were less than all summer, usually 6 to 8 weeks long; and the remaining 5 described their efforts as part-time but lasting all summer. Common features of summer programs included cultural or recreational activities (N=28), academic tutoring (N=20), and college visits (N=19). Considering that most of the sponsorship programs' students are of junior high school age, college visits for them represent much earlier exposure to colleges than most students receive. Finally, thirteen of the 29 summer programs offered employment opportunities.

Work With Parents

Parents are an obvious target for program activities, for their potential influence over the selected young people's educational plans and aspirations. We did not find unique ideas about parental involvement, but programs did seem to have tried tactics (such as providing a meal along with a meeting) that, although not difficult, are not typical in, for example, school efforts to involve parents.

[7]U.S. Department of Education, What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 39.

[8]We cannot distinguish precisely who served as mentors in these reported contacts; financial sponsors, other volunteers, or paid staff may all have been counted.

Most programs (N=30 or 81 percent) started early to involve parents, by requiring their consent for students to participate. Fewer (N=19) required parents to attend meetings. To increase parent involvement, nearly all the respondents said they scheduled meetings at convenient times, such as evenings, while many also provided lunch or dinner with the meeting (26), and some offered other services as an incentive for participation (17). The same sponsorship program that established the after-school activities described above set up one part of its reading program for the lowest achieving students so that parents could also attend, though only four did so. Programs much less often invited parents to participate in formally directing the program; only 15 programs of this type established a formal board or parent council.

Program respondents were not satisfied, however, with the results of these efforts with parents. Reflecting on all the implementation barriers they had faced, about half warned similar programs to expect a lack of family support, ranking this problem as one of the three most significant obstacles they have faced.

Program Funds

Programs' expenses (typically including such items as staff salaries, supplies, and expenses of outings with the students) for the 1988-89 academic year averaged just over $49,000 for the 28 that reported the figures.[9] We computed an average per-student cost of $923, though this is almost certainly an underestimate of the programs' full annual cost. Despite the image of wealthy benefactors providing generous support, survey respondents (typically program staff) stated that lack of money made it hard to provide comprehensive services to their needy sponsorees. Though, on average, most respondents described a fairly broad array of services, they also believe funds are needed to do more.

Virtually all of the 37 sponsorship programs answering the survey have separate funds already set aside to pay the future postsecondary educational expenses of participating students.[10] Some respondents would not

[9]Obtaining accurate expense figures by survey is difficult, especially with programs involving complex arrangements among several organizations. Those individuals chosen to respond to our survey because of their knowledge of the students and the program may not have known the details of a program's annual expenses. Further, even if respondents were fully knowledgeable, we asked only about budgeted expenses; such figures will understate overall costs by not including the dollar value of donated space, equipment, volunteer time, or other items (such as contributed faculty time in university programs or teacher and counselor time in schools). The figures in the text should be considered minimum estimates of programs' true costs.

[10]We got the information on the survey or in follow-up telephone interviews. We could never reach one program which had not answered that question on the survey to confirm whether there was such a fund or not.

disclose the amount and others, whose funds were managed elsewhere, did not know the size of the fund, but the 24 who did answer reported a total endowment of $7,096,000 or an average of just under $296,000 per program, with a range from $16,000 to $1.56 million. Obviously, not all reported full funding of the tuition-guarantee liability at the outset. Programs in the I Have a Dream network are asked to set up a fund in the hands of an independent third party, such as a community foundation, of several hundred thousand dollars at the beginning of the program, which is then invested at a rate of return adequate to satisfy the future tuition guarantee as well as pay annual program expenses.[11] Others are aware of their liability and report fund-raising plans for the coming years while the students are still in school. The adequacy of the financial planning in these programs has not been tested, as they are still in their early years; none of the sponsorship programs reported having to make postsecondary education tuition payments during 1988-89.

Funding questions are a primary concern to staff respondents. Considering problems others would face, respondents often listed problems of obtaining needed resources, especially for current services, as reported in detail in a later section. Fourteen respondents warned others that obtaining funds for the tuition guarantee could be difficult, requiring significant effort.

Last-Dollar Programs

Program Structure, Students, and Goals

Of the 13 last-dollar programs we located, 12 responded to our survey. These included one of the oldest programs we found, started in 1966; two thirds have been started since 1985. The "last dollar" refers to the program's guarantee of the final amount a student needs to attend college (or other eligible postsecondary school), after efforts to obtain all other aid have been exhausted. In order to conserve their own resources, the programs use specialized staff and information resources to help students and their families search aggressively for other aid. The programs typically offer this general help to a broad group of students in one or more schools in a geographic area, starting with college awareness sessions in the junior year and continuing through the application stage in the senior year. (Eleven of the 12 programs responding served students in a geographic area, regardless of where they intended to pursue higher education; one awarded funds only to local students who

[11] According to news accounts, the 130 IHAD programs had a total endowment of $40 million in August 1989.

entered a local public university.) Awards of the last dollars needed wait until admissions and student aid offers from schools are made in the summer after graduation. Thus, these programs' efforts are focused on students who are almost at the end of their high school experience, but go beyond a typical scholarship program by providing early awareness sessions, extensive technical assistance with aid applications, and counseling on college finances generally, as well as the guarantee of some funds to help with unmet needs.

We asked about the size of the group eligible to take part in each program. Most opened eligibility to juniors and seniors in a set of schools in a district or city, and 10 who gave figures reported an average of 3,138 eligible individuals.[12] On average, about half of those eligible participated during the year, which presumably could include taking part in opportunities offered for group workshops and individual financial aid counseling, as well as eventual application for the guaranteed last-dollar funds. Programs reported from 127 to 6,094 participants in 1988-89, for a total among all those responding of 16,988. One last-dollar program we visited, for example, reported that in the previous year there were 2,900 eligible students in 17 high schools, of whom 1,500 were counseled in some way; 252 eventually completed a formal application, and 82 received funds. For our aggregate statistics across all programs of this type, we counted as participants all those receiving some services. Some last-dollar programs continue to offer aid as needed throughout the years of post-secondary education, or to advise students more generally on how to complete their higher education successfully.

Last-dollar programs state a primary goal of helping to increase the college attendance of at-risk youth, and more than half stated that the program's promise of financial assistance for college is a key element in realizing these goals. If the award is broadly available and sizable, substantial funds are needed, which suggests a fund-raising challenge. Perhaps related to this need to raise funds, all but two of the sites noted that a second key goal is to involve business and the community in this positive educational activity.

Sponsors, Staff, and Services

Like other guaranteed-tuition programs, last-dollar efforts are sponsored by a range of groups. Five were started by individuals, three by organizations, and four by a combination of businesses, individuals, and foundations. The five that had individual sponsors reported that these

[12]This figure reflects the total number of eligible students in a school or school district who had the appropriate academic preparation and who could apply for assistance if they had financial need.

individuals spent time with participating students, in addition to providing the financial support. Programs started by organizations or larger groups reported that these sponsors were more engaged in administrative work, including financial support, fund raising, and coordination of activities with schools or foundations.

Staffing patterns varied with the scale of the program implemented. Last-dollar sites reported an average of two paid staff involved with program management and an average of eight paid staff who provided services to students. Two sites also relied on the services of unpaid staff to provide services to students. The median ratio of adults (both paid and volunteer) to students in these programs was 1 to 82.[13]

Consistent with the narrower goals of these programs, most did not report providing academic assistance or other wide-ranging services to student participants. (Such assistance may have been available to students through other sources in their schools or districts.) At the three sites that offered some type of academic assistance in 1988-89, this occurred on an average of two days a month; three programs organized adult mentoring resulting in contact an average of one day a month; and two offered cultural and recreational activities during an average month.

Work With Parents

Most programs did not require or emphasize parental involvement, except in the sense of requiring family financial data to demonstrate the extent of aid needed. Although the nature of these programs does not preclude parents from taking an active role in them, such as helping a student assess costs and resources and weigh specific options for higher education, the programs' structure and the time at which they intervene in students' lives may make parental support somewhat less crucial than in other programs.

Program Funds

Expenses during the 1988-89 school year, not including payments to students for postsecondary financial aid, were $179,000 on average for each last-dollar program. The range was from $5,000, spent by a relatively new program, to just over $650,000, a figure reported by a large, well-established effort with a sizable staff serving a whole city school district. The median annual expense per student participant (in the

[13]The average was 1 to 177, but that figure is strongly affected by several unusually large projects.

broader sense, rather than only those winning last-dollar awards) was $136.[14]

Nine of the programs reported having established separate funds for college aid totaling $14,539,655. The average size of these funds was $1.6 million dollars. Such sizable assets reflect considerable effort by sponsors and organizers that resulted in extensive business and community support.

Despite the fact that last-dollar programs reported relatively large endowments, staff at three fourths of the sites surveyed reported that similar programs might have difficulty obtaining funds for future tuition, and most added that they could also have difficulty securing funding to provide the services to students.

University-Based Programs

Program Structure, Students, and Goals

Of the 24 university-based programs we located, 16 responded to our survey. In general, programs included in this grouping are associated with a specific university campus, and university staff fill key positions. Programs varied in method of student selection, design, services offered, and in the nature of the guarantee. Among the 15 that provided starting dates on the survey, all were relatively new, having begun between 1986 and 1988. Eleven had been initiated by the universities, two by individuals, and three under other types of arrangements.

The programs used different approaches to select or recruit students. Staff at 13 reported selecting students in a first group and then adding others later, averaging 74 once all participants were added. Altogether, these programs had selected a total of 962 students, most of whom were black.[15] Some programs were located at public universities that had reached out to select, as early as 6th grade, small groups of young people for future admissions and tuition guarantee in somewhat similar fashion to the individual-sponsor programs described previously (though usually choosing individuals rather than intact classes). A program we visited gave standard instructions to educators in numerous

[14]The average, $431 per student, was again affected by a few large projects.

[15]In the 12 programs that chose students, staff reported that an average of 96 percent of the students they selected were black; staff of four programs reported Hispanic students, 9 percent on the average; six included white students, who averaged only 2 percent of the group.

separate cities across the state as to how to select students, and although campus officials did review the selections, they had to trust local collaborators to carry out that key step. In two of the cities we visited, quite different approaches had been taken to identifying target schools and individual students. Some programs were at private universities where individual donors had given the funds to sponsor a small group and then turned over program design and management to university staff, with the tuition eventually guaranteed at other institutions besides the host school.

The remaining three university-based programs did not select individuals but made an opportunity available to a larger group, ranging from 106 to 1700 students, such as all those in high school in a geographic area. In the 1988-89 academic year, these three programs reported that 18 to 845 students took part, receiving tutoring or other services and guidance about college.

In summary, university-based programs reported both the approach of deliberately selecting students for the opportunity and that of opening a program to voluntary participation from a large group. A total of 1,898 students participated in 1988-89, about equally divided as to how they became involved.

Programs' goals centered on several themes. All or almost all respondents cited improving students' academic skills and achievement, motivating students to graduate, and increasing college attendance of disadvantaged, at-risk, or minority students. One large university program we visited was initiated following a review that highlighted the continuing shortcomings of other approaches in increasing minority student recruitment and retention. Important elements for realizing these goals cited included academic skill improvement (N=10) and mentors (N=9), with apparently much less agreement on the need for broader cultural or recreational experiences (N=4).

Sponsors, Staff, and Services

As initiators as well as implementors, the university staff have taken on the full range of responsibilities, including planning, coordinating with the public schools and others, raising funds for future tuition and current operations, and spending time with individual students. All of these were commonly cited by respondents, showing less differentiation of roles than in some of the other program types.

The programs may be integrated into other university functions. Staff at nine of the programs reported separate paid managers, with an average

of two such staff each; three others reported unpaid managers. Sizable numbers of staff were, however, reported to be working with students: 7 programs noted an average of 11 paid staff each, and 6 others reported 13 unpaid staff each on average. In a state-wide university program we visited, with students selected from nine cities, graduate students served as dormitory counselors for a summer session on campus, and faculty taught summer classes along with local school teachers. However, the main school-year effort with students was left to local teachers to devise, with occasional visits to the nine sites by a special staff of two from the university. We calculated that, on average, there was one adult for every 18 students in these programs.

The major service provided to students, consistent with the academic emphasis of the programs' goals, was academic help or tutoring. On average, students received this help on 7 days of a typical month. Next in emphasis was contact with an adult mentor, reported to average 5 days per month. Cultural and recreational activities were scheduled on 3 days per month on the average. Overall, respondents from the university-based programs estimated that an average of 104 students received support services during the 1989-90 academic year. In addition, staff at 4 programs reported that an average of 54 family members of students received some type of support services.

Keeping track of students appears to be harder for university-based programs than for others. Fully two thirds of those responding noted that other such programs should expect administrative problems maintaining contact with students. In the statewide program mentioned earlier, such contact from the university would obviously be difficult; local school officials would be the only ones with any practical possibility of being in close touch with the students.

Summer Programs

Eleven respondents said they offered some type of summer program for student participants. Most lasted 2 to 4 weeks; each enrolled 91 students on average. Most (N=10 or 9, respectively) emphasized academic tutoring or cultural and recreational activities; somewhat fewer projects included college visits (N=7); and a handful offered college counseling (N=3), though visits and counseling would obviously be less important in programs where the guarantee was to a single school well-known in advance.

Work With Parents

All but one program required parental consent for student participation, and 10 required that parents attend meetings. Most tried the common

approaches to increase parent involvement, including convenient scheduling (N=15), providing lunch or dinner with a meeting (N=10), and providing transportation (N=7). Respondents from 7 programs warned others to expect resistance or lack of cooperation from family members. Even in the statewide program we visited, university staff worked with local educators to emphasize special contact with parents, and we met with an enthusiastic parent council in one of the nine cities who described their continuing role, including campus visits.

Program Funds

In the 1988-89 academic year, expenses averaged slightly over $99,500 each for the 8 programs that reported such figures. In those programs where staff selected students and for which complete data were available (N=7), expenses averaged $274 per student. Complete data were available on only one program open to a wider group, and its expenses averaged $710 per student participant. Combining the 8 university-based programs for which we had complete data, the 1988-89 expenses per student averaged $328.

These school-oriented programs may have had trouble getting established in the university-wide competition for resources. Of the 16, a majority singled out both limited resources for operations (N=11) and even limitations on the tuition-guarantee funds (N=10) as problems others should expect to face.

Staff at six programs reported having established a separate fund for the tuition guarantee, with four giving dollar amounts ($238,000, on average). Because of their close links to specific universities, the rest of the programs may have informal assurances of tuition waivers to be granted in the future, or other arrangements that make specific funds unnecessary. None awarded postsecondary education payments in 1988-89.

Pay-For-Grades Programs

Program Structure, Students, and Goals

Linking tuition funds to school grades is the least common method of providing guaranteed student aid. We located only four such programs, and all responded to our survey. While all of them target students in inner-city schools and extend the opportunity to earn money for grades to a larger group (rather than just a selected few), the programs vary in scope and details of the award. For example, in a large midwestern city, all students in grades 7 and above are eligible (a total of about 29,000 in

1988-89) and can earn tuition funds for any individual course grade of C or above in a qualifying subject ($40 for any A, $20 for any B, $10 for any C). For a contrasting example, in an eastern city, the program is open only to students at one high school, and the payment is a standard $500 per semester to those who earn grades of A or B in all eligible classes. In the first program, a $10 bonus is awarded if a grade is earned in an honors class; in the second, no adjustment is made for class difficulty, but not all classes qualify. The programs in the two other cities offer the grade-based tuition rewards to elementary school students, with one restricting eligibility to only 32 students in a single 6th-grade class.

Goals of pay-for-grades programs are typically to motivate students to complete high school and to help them to attend college. All also claim a third goal of increasing students' academic skills and achievement, but it is not clear which deliberate activities of the programs could help participating students reach this goal.

Difficulties in maintaining contact with students were mentioned as a potential problem area by all four respondents, perhaps reflecting to some degree the modest tie to the students that the programs generate. Two also noted potential difficulties getting information from schools, and one cited a lack of cooperation from school staff. The sizable record-keeping and verification efforts that are necessary in assessing grades of hundreds or thousands of students may explain these comments.

Sponsors, Staff, and Services

Of the four pay-for-grades programs, three are sponsored by businesses or corporations, and one is run by a foundation that receives business and corporate support. All were started in 1986 or later. Sponsors' roles center on funding future tuition and related expenses, with administrative and program planning support offered in two cases. The largest program (in the midwestern city) indicated that financial sponsors also spent time with participating students.

With one exception, the four programs are relatively small and reported few staff. The largest program has two administrators and eight paid staff who provided services to 1,800 current students, as well as to 450 graduates and to 200 family members in the 1988-89 school year. In contrast, the program that targets one high school has one paid staff member. Those working with elementary school students reported either using unpaid staff or sharing staff with a larger program operating in that city.

Staff in the two programs working with elementary school students reported organizing few activities for students. As noted in discussing the basic assumptions of such programs, providing services to entire eligible schools or district groups is not part of their design; they aim to increase students' own efforts by offering greater rewards. The larger programs did offer services to some students. In the program located in only one high school, services went almost exclusively to the winners, ranging from arranging mentors in the sponsoring corporation to limited academic support along with cultural or recreational activities several days a month. In the city-wide pay-for-grades program, a staff of "advocates" worked with students not yet qualifying for the rewards to locate needed services.

Summer Program

In addition, staff of the two larger programs reported organizing part-time summer components of six weeks' duration in the summer of 1989. The program in one eastern city high school enrolled 15 students in a college entrance-exam preparation course. The midwestern city program enrolled 700 students in cultural and recreational activities and also took students to visit colleges. Staff reported that this summer program is open to all students in grades 7-12, rather than only to winners.

Work With Parents

These pay-for-grades programs, with limited objectives for changing family expectations and aspirations for the student, neither required much parental involvement nor provided services for family members. The respondent at one program did report scheduling meetings at convenient times for parents and providing transportation to meetings. Only one of the four respondents highlighted parental resistance as a warning to other similar programs.

Program Funds

Expenses in these programs for the 1988-89 academic year, excluding postsecondary financial aid, again varied according to the scope of the effort. Respondents from the two elementary-school programs each reported expenses under $10,000; the program that targets one high school spent slightly over $25,000; and the district-wide effort reported a budget of $885,000. The average cost per student was $111.

Three of the four pay-for-grades programs described their funds for postsecondary educational expenses, ranging from one with $10,000 already set aside to another that stated only an estimate (that as much as $10 million could eventually be needed, depending on students' actual grades).

Even though the incentives seem modest and the level of services to students relatively low, staff of two programs did report that similar programs implemented elsewhere could face financial problems involving both the tuition guarantee and routine operations.

Issues in Programs' Growth and Expansion

Program officials named funding as the chief barrier they have faced and as the barrier most likely to confront others attempting similar projects; they singled out their staff as the main ingredient of any success they have experienced so far. From our own observations, we noted additional dilemmas the programs have encountered. This chapter presents data first from answers to our survey and then from our site visits to address the second evaluation question on key issues facing the programs now and likely to face others starting similar programs in the future.

Implementation Barriers and Success Factors

To learn about difficulties the programs had surmounted, and the chances of others doing the same, we asked respondents to evaluate a list of barriers we hypothesized and to describe the three most important in their own words, as well as what they had found helpful in reducing such barriers. We also asked them to identify factors that have generally contributed to the implementation of their programs and could be replicated by others considering starting similar programs. Some of the answers have been alluded to in sections of the previous chapter on individual program types; this section draws the material together to form a general picture of the issues others may face.

Implementation Barriers

Six barriers were checked (from a list of 18) by 50 percent or more of the respondents: four concern funding, the fifth concerns parents' responses, and the sixth keeping track of students. Table 3.1 shows the percent of programs citing each of these six barriers.[1]

Table 3.1: Significant Barriers Other Programs Are Likely to Encounter

Barrier	Percent of current programs citing barrier
Funding to provide services	67%
Maintaining contact with participating students	63
Lack of cooperation by, or resistance from, family members	60
Funding to hire staff	58
Too few staff or volunteers	58
Funding to provide tuition	52

[1]The free response question about the most important barriers produced similar items, with shortcomings of funds and family support at the top of the list, though staff-related concerns such as inexperience (cited by 42 percent of respondents) appeared here and not in the checklist.

Program staff most frequently warned others to expect difficulties in funding services, and cited other funding problems as well, including funding staff and future tuition. Services are crucial to most of the programs' plans; without them, they are not much different from familiar scholarship programs making financial aid available to those who can on their own persevere through school. It is possible that it may be easier to raise funds for the novel and dramatic idea of the tuition guarantee, with the accompanying visibility for everyone involved at emotional public ceremonies for those selected, than to raise funds for the less visible work in supportive services such as tutoring, running summer programs, work with parents, and the like. For example:

- A corporation established a sponsorship program with plans to contribute millions to the tuition-guarantee fund but at present contributes only $5000 per year for staff and services for the several-dozen young people in each program site.
- In another major city, corporate donors gave millions to endow a pay-for-grades program, but "advocates" to work with students in the schools were to be funded from public sources, and have not yet been.
- A major state school started a university-based program, funding a central staff and a summer program itself but relying on local school systems to provide the school-year supportive services for the sponsored students. After several years of concern over the little extra help being provided, university officials told us that "the local schools were poorer than we realized."

Two other kinds of problems were also frequently cited. Staff at almost two thirds of the programs (63 percent) said others should expect difficulty keeping in contact with students, and 60 percent said family cooperation was problematic. Many of the programs are still young and thus have not yet faced years of urban mobility among low-income families, and in addition their students are still required to attend school. Keeping in contact can only get harder, and the staff and sponsors have ambitious goals for providing services that require close contact days, nights, and weekends. Sponsorship programs especially, but the others in varying degrees as well, cannot be implemented by phone or mail.

Given the sizable efforts invested in parent contact, far beyond those normally provided by the typical school program, the reported disappointment in parents' cooperation sounds a discouraging note, since parents will continue to be a major factor in setting young people's aspirations for education. More may, however, be involved here than familiar difficulties such as getting permission for an outing or

arranging for quiet study space at home. The meaning of "parental resistance" needs to be explored further to understand important features especially of sponsorship programs. Some programs may deliberately set up strong adult authority figures for youngsters, such as successful community leaders serving as individual mentors, that some parents may validly fear will compete with them. Sensitive program designers will be dealing with this issue for years, and their experience will be of great value to others.

We found small consensus on solutions for reducing the barriers described here. Only one category of answers even came close to 50 percent agreement, and this contained variations on the theme of getting superb staff and volunteers. Only one other solution commanded the loyalty of even a quarter of the group; about as many said they had in fact found no solution to the barriers listed in table 3.1.

We asked about 18 possible barriers; while 6 were prominent in the responses as described above, 12 were less frequently checked. These areas of less perceived difficulty included turnover among staff and volunteers; space for offices or student activities; cooperation from teachers, school administrators, participating students or other students, or social service agencies; transportation; getting information from schools; and clarifying roles of sponsors, staff, and others.

Success Factors

We asked about factors that had contributed to the respondents' success that could be replicated by others who might be considering starting similar programs. Just under half of those answering responded in terms of what might explain outcomes with the students, and once again they focused on staff, repeatedly listing the importance of good staff role models and close mentoring of students generally. This reliance highlights a major unknown: the feasibility of finding large numbers of the type of multiskilled young people who now serve as paid staff, and of the generous older individuals who now serve as financial sponsors or simply as mentors, if such programs were expanded significantly.

Second among success factors, 39 percent of respondents mentioned a resource-related strategy—agency networking to find resources and services the students can use. This again underscores the concern seen in other questions for locating all the funds and help that are needed. Less than one third cited the importance of having had committed sponsors or other groups supporting the program's efforts. Schools and parents were not commonly cited as key supportive factors, which suggests a

degree of distance between the programs and the two major institutions of family and classroom that they are trying to work with. Table 3.2 summarizes these data.

Table 3.2: Success Factors That Others Might Replicate

Factor	Percent of current programs citing factor
Good staff role models; mentoring	49%
Agency networking to get resources	39
Committed sponsors; other supportive groups	30
Parents' support	23
Schools' support	23

Four Dilemmas Programs Face

The programs we studied are tackling the formidable problems of disadvantaged youth. Sizable funds and enormous commitments of time and spirit are being applied to enlarge horizons and build needed skills; results are intriguing, as described in the next chapter: many students have already been aided by last-dollar programs, and early indicators in other programs are promising. Challenges lie ahead, however, in the form of dilemmas and problems still to be resolved. This section discusses what we learned from detailed discussions with participants and observations of the six programs we visited (as shown in table 1.2, and including examples of all four program types described in chapter 2) on four issues: student selection, staffing, program structure, and relations with local schools.

Student Selection

Who should get a tuition guarantee? Programs differ dramatically in their answers, with significant implications for their operations. Sponsorship programs that typically take all those in a graduating elementary school group are proud of their inclusive philosophy that confidence in the young people, together with supportive services, can bring all of them to the doorstep of college and beyond. Advocates reject more selective approaches as inequitable and as an invalid prejudgment of students' potential.

Advocates of last-dollar programs that are typically open to any graduating senior headed for postsecondary education suggest, on the other hand, that scarce tuition-guarantee resources are best used at that late stage and on those who have proved they can at least complete high school. Such advocates probably believe that in any case there are not enough mentors and sponsors to offer intensive special attention as the

sponsorship programs do to all those leaving elementary school, hence some selective approach is needed, if only natural selection as students move through the upper grades.

We found that, in practice, programs that may not have started with a selective philosophy do end up choosing students to work with. For example:

- Staff in a program with 86 students reported spending a great deal of time and effort in the first two years with about 20 of the most troubled individuals and achieving disappointing results. After much discussion, the sponsor and staff agreed to spend less time with them starting in the third year and to shift resources to "the middle group—the ones that may make it with our help."
- Staff and board members in another, much larger program said that it had proved difficult to raise funds and provide services to the full group of almost 2,000. A principal in the host school district said "they should have chosen students who have the best chance of succeeding." Board members told us they had stopped further planned expansion until they could clarify whether they had the ability to help all those involved.
- A sponsor directed that students be selected at random for a major tuition-guarantee in a school serving disadvantaged urban children. Program staff decided, however, to choose individuals who would be most likely to benefit, according to teachers' judgments of children's accomplishments and home situations. When we interviewed some parents, they seemed articulate and involved with their children's schooling, suggesting that a nonrandom group had been selected.
- A university-based program directed participating school districts to choose junior high school students with promise of eventually completing high-school college preparatory courses with a B average (so that they would qualify for university admission and have a good chance to succeed in college work). We visited one school district in this program and found the staff had not tried to assess promise generally; instead, they had narrowed the pool to include only those who had already achieved a B average or better.

Clearly, programs which begin with a wide range of students face sizable challenges in instilling motivation for higher education in all of them. Building a powerful group climate of shared expectations will be more difficult if there is a very resistant subgroup. Those close to the program may find it hard to keep their faith when some adults who also work with the young people (such as teachers or administrators in the schools) may not be willing to accept the sponsors' unconditional trust

in the young people; in several of our visits, such observers of the programs cited "ungrateful" students, "students who shouldn't be involved," and similar views suggesting they thought students had failed to "earn" the guarantee and showed too little connection between visible behavior and the tremendous gift of the tuition guarantee. Staff efforts may be heavily directed towards those youngsters with troubled home lives, involvements with school discipline, or the police.

On the other hand, selecting students (in, at the start, or out, after some period of failure to thrive in a program) raises difficult questions of the criteria to be used, especially when selection must be made years in advance of the final goal of high school completion and college. Postponing selection until the end of high school solves that problem, but at the cost of failing to reach the many students with potential who left school earlier. Sponsoring a very diverse group appeals to values of inclusiveness and equity but only drives the selection process underground, as limited staff make hard choices about rationing their time and effort.

Staffing

Staffing is a crucial issue, especially to sponsorship programs where the staff will have the longest and most intense relationship with the young people involved. In describing factors affecting success, survey respondents repeatedly identified proper staff selection, and we saw that in detail in our site visits. It is not surprising that such programs must struggle to find staff who will agree to be responsible for encouraging growth in aspirations, in academic skills, and very much more for a group of disadvantaged young people, around the clock, in school and out of school, summer and winter, sometimes for as long as 6 years. We identified three staffing dilemmas: workload, skills, and commitment over time.

In sponsorship programs we visited, we observed a wide range of staff workloads. One enjoyed the services of three full-time staff for 100 students, as well as an additional corps of regular teachers paid extra for an after-school program, a part-time psychologist, and frequent involvement of the sponsor directly with the youngsters. Another could muster only one staff person for every 140 students, with volunteer mentors for some but not all. A third program had one part-time staff person for 35 students. All shared ambitious goals for work with students and their families over 6 years (and, in one case, 12 years), but the great differences in resources suggest some will be better able to deliver than others. Even in the first and most richly supplied program, where the

conditions were commonly regarded by observers as deluxe, after only two years of operations the first set of staff had been replaced, and the second team was exhilarated but tired. And, as we finished our field work in summer 1989, this program's staff abandoned long-awaited one-week vacations to pull the whole group of students and parents together to deal with the grief and mourning caused by the tragic shooting death of one young participant. The youngsters' needs are so pressing and vivid, and the programs' goals are so large, that staff may be tempted to expand expectations infinitely; it thus is not clear how programs will find a way to make the workload manageable.

Secondly, programs face dilemmas in deciding what staff skills to emphasize in hiring. On one hand, programs of all kinds aim to offer a distinct alternative to the life of the street, to emphasize the importance of education, and to provide the aid and support that are needed to increase students' chances of academic success. Should staff, therefore, be expected to be models of successful college graduation, academic achievement, and specific school-related skills? Should they be expected to teach where needed? On the other hand, especially in the sponsorship programs, staff need to walk the streets, find youngsters when they skip school, find the parents when they resist involvement, cajole resources from an enormous range of potential providers, and know and appreciate the positive aspects (as well as the pressures and risks) of life in a disadvantaged urban community, even as they suggest alternative paths out of it. Here, the staff need empathy, firmness, savvy, and perspective—traits that may come from a range of experiences not necessarily gained in school.

We noted a type of backlash that may affect hiring decisions and lead to imbalance in staff skills. Other programs may be viewed as having failed the sponsored youth or not having their best interests in mind, resulting in anger and hostility towards the programs and their professional staff (social workers, educators, juvenile justice workers, and other staff). Such views, in turn, may lead hiring in the new programs to deemphasize such professional backgrounds even though the sponsorship efforts need staff who possess the formal skills represented by school success and degrees, along with many other talents.

This ambivalence was reflected in survey responses to a question about specific elements desirable in staff backgrounds. Just over half the programs indicated they valued college graduation, while 94 percent checked that staff "must have strong rapport, relationships with students." A third of the respondents believed youth agency experience

was good, but just 20 percent wanted teaching experience, and only 9 percent thought social welfare agency work would be a useful background.

Programs we visited tried to have it all, typically by hiring young minority college graduates who knew at first-hand the struggles the programs' youth faced, but who had not had long careers in bureaucratic settings.[2] One sponsorship program found two staff who, before attending nearby colleges, had gone through the very local high school the group was headed for. Another hired a mix of graduates and non-graduates, typically the first in their families to attempt higher education and many from the same neighborhoods as the selected students (though the director told us that, of the 13, the most effective was a woman who never finished her degree). Last-dollar and pay-for-grades programs have fewer staff and more modest goals; thus, they tend not to face such serious dilemmas in hiring. In general, multiple goals require multiple staff skills; to the extent that staff are hired for their street wisdom or community strengths rather than for their talents with academics, programs will need to provide such models and help through other channels.

Commitment, overload, and burnout are the final staffing issues we noted. All the tuition-guarantee programs involve to some degree committed staff working hard to improve the chances for disadvantaged youngsters. Keeping hope alive in such work is a generic problem. The sponsorship programs, with the most ambitious goals and the longest-term commitments to participants, are the most demanding (and perhaps stretched most thinly in resources, as survey responses suggest). In hopes of providing a continuity of adult support that may be otherwise lacking for the sponsored young people, programs asked young staff to sign on for as much as 6 years.

Long commitments to demanding work must create stress. Simple staff shortages are an obvious problem; we noted one program with 35 sponsored first-graders that had only one part-time staff member, based in a community organization, to handle all out-of-school activities. Since work with the families will be important in achieving long-term educational success for these youngsters, it seemed to us that this one individual will be significantly overloaded. Even if adult-to-student ratios

[2]The national IHAD foundation originally did not suggest, or require, that staff of affiliated projects hold college degrees, though some college was encouraged as a criterion. This has changed, and staff are now expected to be college graduates.

are more favorable, the goals of changing the expectations and providing or reinforcing needed skills for future success for groups of disadvantaged youth are bound to be unfulfilled to some degree, especially in the short run, with consequent morale problems and burnout. We did not see the programs, that are mostly still in their first few years, addressing these issues directly, though staff graphically described their weariness and frustrations along with their accomplishments.

Program Structure

The basic dilemma programs face here is how much time to devote to formalizing what they are doing, especially to clarifying and codifying the roles that the diverse participants take on. The programs, while new, also bring together complex combinations of familiar ingredients—wealthy individuals or companies who are financial sponsors, public schools, universities and others in higher education, foundations, community-based organizations, and more. They aim, however, to go beyond old familiar programs, to bring to long-standing problems new kinds of staff and ideas, resources, and a fresh spirit of innovation free of the limits imposed by the accustomed patterns and the accepted boundaries of existing organizations. Programs with multiple goals, as well as with growing staffs and possibly even multiple sites, face the question of whether to openly confront and work to reconcile the diverse perspectives of participants.

Examples of these dilemmas of whether and how to bring structure to programs that we saw in our visits include the following:

- A program may be unsure how formally and consistently to structure the staff's work, and may even have a countervailing rationale of innovation and "letting them just develop whatever works best with the kids." Formalization may seem a part of (discredited) past practice that in some agencies may have been literally "by the book." One sponsorship program with a staff of 13 simply asked new staff to follow older ones around for a week as their basic training and orientation. Many hundreds of adult volunteers worked with the sponsored youth, but these volunteers had very little guidance.
- Multisite programs face even more obvious issues of consistency. The national IHAD foundation now offers suggested policies and other guidance to new sponsors seeking affiliation (for example on responsibly conserving the tuition-guarantee funds, on staff qualifications and salary levels, and on how sponsors should personally deal with sponsored students in areas such as gift giving). But even a basic issue such as student selection was handled differently in various sites of both a

nationwide sponsorship program we visited and a statewide university-based program. It may be only a matter of time before some program's process of choosing individuals or groups for such sizable benefits as a multiyear program of services and a tuition guarantee is challenged for fairness, and inconsistency across a program's sites may emerge as a weakness at that point.

- Programs link diverse organizations as well: staff employed by one organization must work inside another, a situation which offers many opportunities for conflicts over goals and activities. Sponsorship programs typically give the major funds for annual program operations to a local community-based organization, such as a settlement house or neighborhood youth center, which then provides a location for meetings and recreation activities and hires the core staff. These staff work in schools for much of the year, however, and must closely collaborate with teachers and principals who find it very novel to have a resident advocate or watchdog for one small group of youngsters asking, for example, to look at grades or trying to get a track placement upgraded. We noted that continuing effort was needed to get work space for programs' staff (always at a premium in schools), to get approval to meet students during school (limited in several places to contact only during brief lunch periods), and to see students' school records (not allowed in some cases). "Who do these people report to?" was an issue constantly under negotiation as community-based organizations' staff tried to get established in the schools to help the sponsored students.
- Similarly, the last-dollar program we visited provided special staff to give high school students extra information and advice about college financial aid, to supplement the regular counselors who may lack that technical expertise. Program officials said that, although they were eager to meet with anyone, their staff tried hard to establish a clear, separate role and limits to their counseling, including taking care to refer students to the regular counselors for all discussions of students' overall ability, general academic goals, or personal problems. They said these efforts had not uniformly paid off and that they were still, after years in the schools, distrusted by the regular counselors. The regular school counselors in some cases reserved the right to approve or disapprove students' contact with the last-dollar program staff and even tried to steer away some students who seemed to them "not college material." This is in part the selection dilemma (trying to predict who can benefit), but it is also the issue of program structure and who has the authority to make key decisions.

The diverse mix of organizations and people involved in tuition-guarantee programs may help guard against a stifling orthodoxy and premature closure about project approaches and staffing.[3] Conversely, unresolved structural confusions seemed fairly common in programs we visited (what was most important, who would do what, who had the last word on key matters), and, over the long term, continuing debate can be a drain on the time and good will of participants.

Relations With Local Schools

Tuition-guarantee programs we studied were outside interventions working with the public schools, schools whose own limited ability to reach and motivate poor and minority youngsters is—usually only implicitly—the reason for the programs' existence. The dilemma arises as programs try to balance their need for smooth relations and cooperation with schools to assure continued access, and any views they may hold on the schools' shortcomings and changes needed to benefit their students or the more general population.

Some programs largely accepted the situation they faced in the local schools. For example, an early IHAD sponsor stated a clear philosophy that "students can learn anywhere if they're properly motivated." While not at all satisfied with the workings of the urban system that enrolled the selected students, this individual worked chiefly with the individual, sponsored young people so that they aggressively pursued all the resources that were available. The sponsor reported making only a few personal calls to high officials to get egregious inequities experienced by the group adjusted. In fact, the wide publicity given, and the community support needed for, the sponsorship type of programs may lead visible sponsors to mute their criticism of the schools and to take on a stance of partnership.

Staff certainly were conscious of teaching students how to tolerate certain situations. At an urban sponsorship program we visited, where students in individual classes were said to frequently face the familiar barriers of insensitive teachers, lackluster lessons and assignments, and scarce materials, staff said they told students to "adopt the slave mentality—just take it, do what they say, look towards the future, and

[3]After reviewing several programs she judged successful in helping disadvantaged people (including the original I Have a Dream program in New York City), one author has stressed the common factor of their willingness to break from common patterns of service delivery. According to her observations, successful programs typically included just this feature of "crossing traditional professional and bureaucratic boundaries," encouraging flexibility of staff and program structure, and redefining professionals' roles as needed. See Lisbeth B. Schorr (with Daniel Schorr), Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 257.

try to survive." A university-based program we visited controlled only the on-campus summer session; all the rest of the program for the selected students was designed and delivered by local school officials and subject to only limited influence from campus staff.

This acceptance of the status quo does not prevent programs from seeking the most favorable conditions to be found among the range of variations present within the system. For example, one sponsorship program we visited carefully selected the area of the city to work in as one with an encouraging educational climate, selected the elementary school whose graduates were sponsored from among the best, and further arranged a unique scheme to keep the group together in one intermediate school judged to have a strong program and good leadership. In addition, the program was assigned a central office official to work in the school as liaison between the project and the system, and got a central office official and selected staff to operate an after-school program for the sponsored group. This was very special treatment, which could serve to mute discontent with generally difficult circumstances for students in the larger system.

We saw, then, few examples of programs working to improve education for students beyond those directly involved in the tuition guarantee—just as one would expect in view of the programs' aims and theories as described earlier.[4] School- or district-wide pay-for-grades or last-dollar programs, by definition, reach many more than a typical sponsorship program of 100 can, but even so the programs may not go beyond their own strategy to draw implications on wider issues—for example, to suggest that educational changes may be necessary if few students are earning tuition funds in pay-for-grade competitions. This was true of the one pay-for-grades program we visited; based on our interviews with student winners, it appeared the rewards had gone to those with well-developed academic skills and strong family and community support who would have had a good chance of success in any case. The staff had accepted the fact that the scheme offered little for those at the margin or even farther from the winners' circle. The major city's last-dollar program we visited was listed as one part of a very aggressive business-led plan to both support the schools and press for major improvements, but the last-dollar program in practice seemed to work independently of those wider educational changes whose need it revealed. For example, although the last-dollar program had operated for some years and in

[4]Only 9 percent of the survey respondents indicated that reform of public schools was one of the four most important goals for their project.

that time served a small fraction of the thousands of students in the system, only recently had there been exploration of improving college awareness at earlier grades so that aspirations could be increased long before the junior year when the program now begins. Just the existence of the externally-provided student aid counseling in itself suggested a gap in district services, but it was not clear that the district was on that account under any pressure to improve its own counseling services.

Thus, the private-sector tuition-guarantee programs reach a sizable but still small number of students, and they seem not to be engaged in broader reform strategies. Expecting more from them is unfair as it is not their aim, and is to some degree unrealistic in light of the major efforts needed with the students now involved. Perhaps their example can generate broader action to improve opportunities for other students with similar needs; if not, the programs themselves will have contributed only a small amount to the overall improvement needed in educational opportunity for disadvantaged youth.

Evaluation Results to Date and the Chances of Learning More

Sponsorship and university-based programs report success in keeping groups of selected students intact, and last-dollar and pay-for-grades programs have helped hundreds of students with tuition guarantees. Individual programs report significant interim effects on students. This chapter addresses the third evaluation question concerning outcomes by reporting on all the early evidence of results that we could gather from our survey and site visits. It also discusses the longer-term potential for evaluation of results, including survey information on data being collected and evaluation plans, as well as site-visit observations on programs' apparent interest in learning from experience. The chapter concludes with data on income differences among young men and women with different levels of education, to demonstrate the potential payoff if the programs are effective.

Results So Far

Our survey did not request data on programs' attainment of their goals, such as that of improving students' school performance or raising their aspirations, for two reasons. We had no feasible way to confirm the answers, and the information could have been gathered in so many different ways that aggregation would not be possible. For the newer programs, we analyzed programs' holding power (or retention) by comparing survey data on the numbers of students originally selected with whether they were still in school and involved in the programs at the time of our questionnaire. As an indicator of the results of last-dollar and pay-for-grades programs, we asked how many students had graduated and received tuition funds, and the amounts.

Sponsorship Programs

Based on a single indicator of results to date—retention, or the extent to which the selected group of students continues intact—sponsorship programs appear to be flourishing. The average program selected a total of 106 students and reported an average of 98 still affiliated by the time of our survey in 1988-89. (Only 4 programs had graduated students.) Fourteen reported losing an average of 5 students for reasons that included moving, dropping out of school, or being terminated from the program. Challenges lie ahead, of course; in view of the strong possibility of an increased scattering of the sponsored students during the coming high school years, it was not surprising that 20 programs noted that other similar efforts will likely face administrative problems in maintaining contact with participating students.

Individual programs we visited had varied retention accomplishments. The largest sponsorship program we visited, with about 1,900 junior

high school students, reported losing 169, or less than 10 percent, in its first two years. On the other hand, 4 of 35 students moved away in the first year in another program that selected its sponsored student group at a very young age, suggesting the possibility that few of the original students may be left after several years.

Because graduation is far in the future for most sponsored students, few programs had thought through details of how they will eventually furnish the promised tuition guarantee to a selected student who moved from the program's influence at an early point.

Where possible in our visits, we noted interim results beyond retention. In one sponsorship program now two years old and with its students finishing 7th grade, school staff told us that the group's attendance and test scores had improved significantly during the two years, that their test scores were better than those of other 7th graders in the same school, and that their school grades had not improved.[1] Students and parents we talked with believed that the program had major effects on students' school work, including the improving of reading skills. Improved academic performance, especially on tests, is plausible for many students in this program because a large number attended the extensive after-school program, described in chapter 2, as well as a summer program, both of which included academics and test-taking skills.

Results of one long-running sponsorship program appear to be very favorable. Thirty-four, or over half the original group of 61 sixth graders sponsored beginning in 1981 by the first New York City I Have a Dream program, are said to be enrolled at least part-time in public and private colleges. Another nine at least graduated from high school or received general equivalency diplomas. Eight left the neighborhood, and little is known of their progress. Four others were described by the program sponsor, in an August 1989 press interview, as "lost souls" who were unlikely ever to take up the tuition-guarantee offer. One of the original group was in prison but, reportedly with program encouragement, was taking college courses there. A New York school official, formerly an administrator in the East Harlem area where the sponsored

[1]School officials cited confidentiality restrictions and would not show us documentation even of summary analyses. Thus, we could not confirm the reported student outcomes. Program staff had seen individual students' grades and test scores, but added that school officials would not share the comparative analyses of sponsored and non-sponsored students, even when asked to by the sponsor.

students lived in 1981, recalled the typical low achievement at the elementary school they attended and observed that "if 50 percent of those kids are going to college, it's a small miracle."[2]

Last-Dollar Programs

Last-dollar programs working with graduating seniors can show results sooner than sponsorship efforts. In 1988-89, the average program (of 10 answering the question) awarded about $154,000 in last-dollar grants to 239 students. From all the last-dollar programs responding to our survey, 2,389 students received grants totalling $1.54 million. The programs varied in whether they concentrated funds: some served many and others only a few. The average grant in the programs ranged from $166 to $1,457, and the awards were spread across groups of students ranging in size from 17 to 700. On the average, programs awarded students just under $800 each in 1988-89.

Several programs have surveyed recipients or analyzed records and published the results. For example, in 1988, the Cleveland Scholarship Program surveyed a random sample of 2,005 students who were given last-dollar awards in the years 1967-83 (but obtained a response rate of only 38 percent). The data showed that 60 percent of respondents were minorities and that most attended four-year schools. Overall, 77 percent said they had finished college, and 82 percent said the aid was important in helping them go. For those recipients who went to four-year colleges, completion rates were 85 percent for white respondents and 75 percent for black. The low survey response rate suggests caution, however, in generalizing to the whole group of program participants.

Boston's ACCESS last-dollar program reported data on the 408 students assisted since its start with the city's high school class of 1985, including an 80 percent rate of continuation from the first to second year of college. This program also pointed to citywide data showing an increase in those going to postsecondary school of any kind from 50 percent early in the decade to almost 60 percent in 1988. However, the citywide data reflect many programs and influences in addition to ACCESS.[3]

[2]Information in this paragraph is from Joseph Berger, "East Harlem Students Clutch a College Dream," New York Times, August 27, 1989, pp. 1, 28. The program sponsor gave similar figures to us in an interview six months earlier on February 3, 1989.

[3]A larger citywide effort to improve high school graduation rates and academic performance, called the Boston Compact, includes promise of a job in a local firm for successful graduates. The effects of the Compact are as yet uncertain and were not part of our study.

Because such reports typically lack comparison groups of similar students who did not receive the program benefits, it is not currently possible to draw firm conclusions attributing the participants' high school or higher education outcomes to the programs.

University-Based Programs

Almost all the university-based respondents reported on the survey that the students chosen or selecting themselves into participation had continued in school and in their involvement in the program activities with little or no attrition. The statewide university-based program we visited had been in operation only one year. After relying on local school districts for services beyond the summer institute at the campus, the program had discovered that little had in fact been done to aid the students. Thus, most participants we interviewed did not identify outcomes other than general pride in selection and satisfaction with key events such as the induction ceremony and the campus session in the summer.

Pay-For-Grades Programs

Early results in the two programs with wide eligibility show that many students did not meet the requirements to receive funds, which in turn raises basic questions about this approach to helping students. Just under one third of the students in grades 7-12 in the large midwestern city failed to earn even one C (and thus qualify), and 96 percent of the students in the eastern city high school (where all A and B grades were needed) did not qualify. (Outcome data were not available for the two programs that targeted elementary schools.) It will be of interest to learn how the experience of low success rates is interpreted by educators and sponsors, and whether any program changes are made. It is not yet possible to infer much about whether a modest financial incentive linked to grades is, in itself, influential, or whether it needs to be larger.

We anticipated several possible side effects of pay-for-grades programs, but none surfaced in the opinion data provided to us. No respondent mentioned, either in the survey or in our visits, that grade inflation had occurred as a result of the program, that teachers felt pressured about their grading practices, or that students had systematically taken different sets of courses so that it would be easier to earn the reward.

Those leaving school and beginning to collect their accumulated tuition funds in 1988-89 included 486 students in the midwestern citywide program who earned an average of $138. The nine graduates who collected funds from their eastern city high school program received an average of $667. (Funds in such programs may be paid out over several years, so

students may have earned a total sum greater than is indicated by these amounts.) The programs reported paying out a total of $73,000 in 1988-89.

Learning From Experience

In addition to looking for results, which we knew were likely to be sparse, we looked also at whether there would in future be more opportunities to learn from these interesting and novel programs. Each is trying many ideas and needs to sort out what works and retain the best practices; each also needs to show results in order to obtain or validate continued support. In addition, however, such knowledge can accumulate and generalize, allowing others to begin similar programs more efficiently with shorter periods of search for workable practice, even if originators have no particular expansionist interests or aims.

Evaluation Plans

Seventy-nine percent of all respondents said they were formally evaluating progress towards their goals. (There were not significant differences among the four program types in these answers about evaluation under way.) Very few programs of any type had engaged outsiders to do these evaluations; most reported they had assigned the evaluation to internal staff.

In our visits, evaluation was typically not very visible. There were several exceptions. At one university-based program, a professor had volunteered to systematically design an evaluation and gather data; with university support, she was seeking outside funds to expand the study. And, at a major citywide pay-for-grades program, an outside organization had been contracted to do an evaluation.

Data Collection

Our survey also asked about data routinely kept on students, to allow us to assess the feasibility of evaluation apart from programs' intentions. Table 4.1 shows basic data kept by most programs (80 percent or more) and other data kept by fewer (74 percent or less). Those few programs already paying out (not shown in the table) would of course have records on recipients, schools attended, amounts paid, and the like.

Table 4.1: Student Records Kept

Student record	Percent of programs keeping record
Records kept by most programs	
Home address, phone	97%
Current grade level	96
Schools attended	94
Academic grades	93
Attendance at program activities	81
Records kept by fewer programs	
Test scores	74
Family contacts	74
Attendance at school	67
Family information	65
Support services used	57
School discipline actions	48
Performance in program activities	45

Thus, data would be available from a sizable number of programs on students' progress through school and their performance as shown in grades and tests. Such data would permit some description. Evaluation comparing students' accomplishments before and after the program would require additional information. In addition, evaluation of the differential impact of parts of programs could be difficult, since data on use of support services seem to be kept less commonly.[4] Evaluators could ask retrospective opinions about important parts of the program, but participants' memories about rates of use of services would be unreliable due to the many years involved in most sponsorship programs.

Determining whether a program caused certain results requires knowledge of what would have happened in its absence. Press accounts of programs' effects may use statistics on the general results of schooling (for example, test scores or drop out rates) in the students' city or neighborhood as the comparison, assuming the students in both the regular school and the tuition-guarantee programs are roughly similar. Programs do, however, select students to participate, in varying ways (as previously discussed), so the participants may not be exactly typical.

[4]At a sponsorship program we visited, important data were being gathered on students' attendance and performance in different activities of the program, but not out of interest in evaluation; the data were used to administer a complex scheme of incentive awards.

The university-based program we visited noted that a group of students nominated but not selected could form a comparison group. However, no data were being systematically gathered on them, and we didn't hear of such conscious comparisons elsewhere. Use of this kind of comparison group for evaluation purposes would be difficult if not started early in the basic plans. We noted above that survey respondents cited keeping track of students as they move, for the long life of some of the tuition guarantees, as an administrative problem; it will affect evaluation as well to the extent that students are lost when they leave the programs and cannot be found for later inquiry. Attrition is reported as slight in most programs now, but most sponsorship programs have years still to run before students even enter higher education, and all types of programs face problems in keeping track of students after the high school years.

Interest in Serving as a Model

Evaluation may be given less attention because influencing others is not a common goal for programs we surveyed. Only 28 percent of respondents selected the goal of serving as a model for wider replication as one of their four most important aims. Thus, any use of scarce staff time or use of time in student and parent interaction to collect data on program operations, analyze its meaning, and generally try to learn from experience to help others may have only modest support.

Links With Prior Federal Efforts to Increase Access

We found that virtually no one we spoke to at any site mentioned the federal Upward Bound program. Though it does not have a tuition-guarantee component, the Upward Bound program is similar in its goal of attempting to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond high school among low-income and potential first-generation college students who are enrolled in high schools or who are veterans. It is similar also in some of the program components used, such as various kinds of supportive services and enrichment experiences, summer sessions on campus, and short-term money incentives such as stipends for the students. Federal funds of $80.4 million were awarded in academic year 1988-89 to 404 programs (chiefly at colleges and universities) that enrolled about 31,000 students. The average federal cost per participant was reported by the Department of Education to be $2,610.

Though the federal government has sponsored this effort to increase college attendance of disadvantaged and minority students for over 20 years, we did not hear a single reference that suggested the new private-

sector programs in the 1980's either built upon any base of knowledge from prior Upward Bound efforts or keep in touch with such programs now.

There has been no recent evaluation of Upward Bound's results, though one is planned to begin in 1990. It would be of great interest to have comparable data on the federal and nonfederal programs that have similar goals.

The Utility of Formal Study and Evaluation

Sponsorship programs have many segments that require different resources and arrangements (after-school teaching, personal mentoring, and enrichment experiences); it would be useful to determine which are most important so that resources can be targeted most effectively. It will be especially interesting to evaluate the success of what is most unique about these programs—that is, the sponsor-student interaction. Such an assessment would need to be sensitive enough to capture and analyze what may be a wide range of styles of mentoring, and to learn how successful mentors work towards new and different goals with young people without alienating their parents.

The pay-for-grades programs will offer an early case study and test of the use of evaluation. In one program we visited, we noted that a very small proportion of students had received funds; a group of the winners that we interviewed said they had always planned to attend college, which suggests that the newly-available funds had been a reward but perhaps not much of an added incentive for them; and a group of nonwinners expressed more anger than motivation. Other parts of the school program were perhaps being strengthened to provide improved chances for a greater number of students to win, but in portraying the sponsor's efforts, the program coordinator described scattered services that went only to winners. The large-scale effort of the same type in the midwestern city also resulted in a great many nonwinners, even though the qualifying grades were lower. These observations raise the question of whether the program sponsors will examine the data and reflect on their results so far. In turn, that reflection may suggest a need for review of the basic assumptions of such programs, which are in marked contrast to the assumption of other tuition-guarantee programs that motivation can be unlocked in a much wider range of students given financial guarantees and supportive services.

If evaluations that find small effects lead to the ending of programs, they may, over time, stifle the general risk-taking and initiative necessary for the repeated efforts of trying to find solutions to important problems. Program designers may fear such a negative outcome and accordingly distrust evaluation, with two unfortunate effects: program results, whether good or not, are not documented, and thus little is learned about which of the programs' assumptions may be correct.

Hypothetical Costs and Benefits

More education benefits everyone in the nation, not just those who stay in school longer and get the diploma or the degree. The major state and local efforts to reform pre-college education in recent years, and the continuing concerns over rates of access to higher education, show a general awareness that the quality of the nation's economic and civic life are linked to better schooling results. Such benefits to society of a more educated workforce and citizenry, though difficult to quantify, are undoubted, and provide the basic rationale for interest in the results of the programs we reviewed for this report.

We also looked for information on costs and benefits at the individual level. We found, however, that we could only compare costs and results across programs hypothetically, since we have incomplete cost data and no evidence on long-term outcomes. The most expensive type, those sponsoring individuals or a class of young people, reported average annual per student expenses of $923, though this is almost certainly an underestimate of the overall costs. Per student, such programs could therefore cost an average of about $11,000 by the time a student completes college, assuming 6 years of school and summer programs and 4 years of tuition guarantee.[5]

In terms of benefits to individuals, income comparisons among those with different levels of education provide one yardstick. The average young college graduate in 1987 earned much more than a high school graduate of the same age, $8,090 more for men and $6,553 for women. The differences are even greater when college graduates' earnings are compared to earnings of those who dropped out of high school. Table 4.2

[5]To estimate the higher education cost we used New York state as an example. A typical sponsorship program guarantees to meet the cost of 4 years of tuition and registration fees for a resident at the state university. In New York, that amounts to $5280. The hypothetical costs would be less in states with lower-cost schools, and actual payouts could be lower depending on students' eligibility for other aid. The $11,000 figure thus represents an estimate of the cost of the most expensive sponsorship program. Hypothetical total costs for the other three types of programs would be lower because most start later in high school, cost less while the student is in school (ranging from $111 to $431 annually per student), and provide benefits much smaller than full tuition.

shows the average 1987 earnings of young men and women with different levels of education. This incentive to complete higher education has grown, also; the earnings gap has widened through the 1980's with the demand for more and more skilled individuals, following a period of concern about possibly "overeducated" Americans in the 1970's. The differences shown in the table are for one year; across a working lifetime, the aggregate differences favoring those with more education would clearly be very large.[6]

Table 4.2: Average Annual Earnings of Persons 25-29, by Education Level[a]

Education completed	Earnings	
	Males	Females
1-3 years of high school	$17,268	$13,001
4 years of high school	21,143	15,247
1-3 years of college	23,041	17,693
4 years of college	29,233	21,800

[a]These figures include only earnings (not other income) for those aged 25-29 who worked full-time year-round.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 162, Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1987 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), table 36.

Analysis of the overall returns to any of the tuition-guarantee programs would need (in addition to more complete cost figures) data on the proportions of students who complete high school, enter higher education, and earn degrees. An expensive program represents a sizable investment in an individual; as table 4.2 demonstrates, the payoff at the individual level from higher education is clear in the form of higher income. (Higher individual income has the general social benefits of higher taxes paid, lower reliance on social programs, and so forth.) Programs will, however, vary in their overall efficiency depending on how many of those involved complete the higher-education levels.

[6]Sound forecasts of lifetime income require estimates or assumptions about how income will grow. Income growth is affected by several factors, including changes in the demand for jobs of various kinds, unemployment rates, and productivity growth. Though we did not attempt specific forecasts, it seems likely that under almost any combination of assumptions about the future, those with college educations would continue to have a large income advantage.

Summary and Conclusions

Our data allow us to describe the current set of programs that guarantee higher education tuition, including barriers to their expansion or replication as well as key issues facing the programs, and to document the results they have obtained to date. Taken together, the data suggest early indications of promise, challenges still ahead, and enormous potential returns if the programs effectively move many disadvantaged young people to and through higher education at their current costs.

Current Programs

GAO's survey data show that tuition-guarantee programs involved at least 42,496 students in 1988-89, targeted on minorities and the disadvantaged.[1] The total numbers are certainly larger, since not all programs responded to our survey.[2] Their emphases vary, with the largest group of sponsorship programs offering not only full tuition but intensive and broad-ranging support from an early grade, and others offering smaller funds and fewer additional support services at later stages in students' schooling. Sponsorship programs spend, on average, over $900 per student per year and involve fewer students than the other types of programs. Pay-for-grades programs spend the least, $111 per student per year, and appear to offer the fewest services along with their modest incentives. Beyond the general assumption (based on sound research) they all share, that student aspirations are more important than their family social or economic background in determining their future, the different program designs reflect contrasting assumptions about the incentives and supports needed to change prevailing patterns of low continuation by disadvantaged and minority youth from high school to higher education.

Implementation Barriers and Success Factors

Despite the sizable resources raised for the programs, survey respondents predict funding barriers for others. They also are disappointed in their ability to gain cooperation from parents. It is not clear whether either of these reports reflect barriers strong enough to significantly threaten the current programs' eventual results. The only frequently cited success factor is the hiring of superb staff.

[1]This figure includes the 19,766 winners of any tuition reward, even $10 for one C, in the large midwestern city pay-for-grades program.

[2]Eugene Lang told us in 1989 that projects like his in New York included 1650 students, and those outside New York City affiliated with the national I Have a Dream Foundation included between 7,000 and 8,000 students. By 1990, press accounts reported a figure of 9,000 in 31 cities. We had survey responses from sponsorship programs of all kinds with a total of 3,617 students.

We observed programs offering students supportive services with potential for significant effect, such as extensive extra academic help given in small groups and with attractive incentives for performance. The potential impact of such efforts is undoubted, based on research showing the relationship of academic achievement to the time spent.

In addition to barriers they now identify, programs will encounter additional challenges. Many can be expected to face dilemmas of how to

- match the program resources to the students involved, either by selection or some other method;
- decide on the mix of skills needed in staff, including those who can help insure that participating students get the skills needed to succeed in school;
- sort out roles and authority, especially with the schools and within the complex new organizations being formed; and
- decide the balance between accepting or resisting the current school programs for the sponsored students.

Programs' Results So Far

Programs reported several kinds of success. Guaranteed-tuition payouts by sponsorship and university-based programs have not really begun. In the other two types of programs, in the 1988-89 academic year, 2,884 students going on for further education with the aid of 12 programs reporting to us received a total of $1,615,330 in tuition grants. To support the cumulative tuition-guarantees now in effect, 39 programs reported having set aside a total of just under $22.7 million. The newer programs do not yet face their greatest potential dropout problems, as they are still dealing with students who must attend school; programs generally report success in keeping student groups intact and involved in the program (minimizing attrition). Individual programs cite students' academic accomplishments that exceed those of comparison groups.

Incomplete data on programs' expenses show that these vary widely, but even the most expensive sponsorship efforts would over years of school and higher education, at the level of an individual, cost an amount that would be readily exceeded by the increase in income for those completing high school and some years of college. Programs' overall efficiency in getting large numbers of students to such higher education levels is not yet known, but is a key evaluation question for the future.

Evaluation Plans and Data Collection

Most programs say they are doing formal evaluation, but our review of data now commonly kept suggests these facts will help answer only a limited set of questions about what happened, and virtually none about why. Few programs aspire to be models for others. This situation does not augur well for evaluation, despite its potential value in helping sort out what works in complex programs. Finding effective methods of helping disadvantaged youth attain higher education is important because better educational outcomes are a foundation for national economic, cultural, and civic achievement. For individuals also, maintaining a high and rising standard of living depends on maximizing earnings, which is possible only through increased education.

Conclusions

Our key findings are (1) that programs that have not yet graduated students report success in retention—that is, in keeping the groups intact and in school; this is an important precondition to all other effects on students and eventual outcomes; (2) individual programs report major interventions that could have significant effects if continued, such as hundreds of hours of additional teaching after school and year-round close support from adult mentors; and (3) at least one individual program reports considerable success in improving graduation rates and attendance at college among a disadvantaged population, though the precise nature of the program that yielded the results is unknown.

We identified three problem areas. First, programs report difficulty in finding needed funds. Second, as presently designed, the pay-for-grades type of program seems least likely to contribute to improved graduation and higher education rates for disadvantaged students, in view of the modest rewards available and the limited participation we observed. Finally, the limited data-collection under way, as well as the assignment of evaluation to internal staff who may have competing duties, will make it difficult to eventually identify the programs' outcomes and what may have contributed most to them.

The tuition-guarantee programs form a dramatic demonstration, involving major challenges still ahead but also important potential outcomes that bear watching. If they are successful in solving operational dilemmas and in designing effective programs that get disadvantaged young people to and through college, one conclusion will have to be that the cost of a program, assuming adequate support, is less important than the timing of the intervention. The overall cost of the most expensive program we estimate at about $11,000, which is not a great deal more than the cost for a student who receives four years of federal Pell

grants at the current maximum (a total of $9,200). The tuition-guarantee programs, however, begin to use their resources as early as 6th grade, and in highly flexible ways, in order to lay the motivational foundation on which students' choices of track and classes in high school will be based, which if done wisely then permits a student to consider the widest range of postsecondary options.

Thus, if these demonstrations prove successful, policies aimed at causing significant changes in higher-education attendance by disadvantaged students may need to focus spending in new ways, on new kinds of interventions that start much earlier. It would then remain to be seen whether specific elements that are probably key ingredients in programs' success, such as intensive additional academics or personal mentoring, can be generated on a broader scale. Even if the programs themselves are not doing much data-gathering and analysis as yet, the potential significance of the lessons they hold suggests the critical importance of assuring the close study of the outcomes in a few years.

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Suggestions for Evaluation Data Collection and Design

Useful data could be kept by tuition-guarantee programs to help in assessing what works and why. Comparison of students in the program with other similar students is a design feature essential in interpreting observations.

Suggestions for evaluation are offered below, including useful data on the students, the program, and outcomes, followed by discussion of the comparison-group design issue.

Data on Students

One starting point for evaluation is to understand where a student stood upon entering a program. School grades, attendance, and test results for a year or more before enrollment in the tuition-guarantee program are helpful here. If a program involves one or more school districts with computerized records, any special student identification numbers should be recorded to allow later retrieval of data from the official system. The student's own aspirations are a major focus of most programs; data on these could be gathered from an initial interview, preferably before the program's own powerful rhetoric and ceremonies of induction take effect. Question-wording from major national studies, such as the High School and Beyond Survey by the National Center for Educational Statistics, could be used to allow comparison with a wider population. Data from other people who know the student can show the context in which the program will be working. Such information could include parents' background (education and work) and their aspirations for the student, as well as older sisters' and brothers' educational history; past teachers, if interviewed quickly after a student is selected, could recall the student's prior work and outlook.

As students advance through school, an initial record can be kept up-to-date with notes on schools attended and dates.

Data on the Program

It is useful to identify major program elements, such as summer school, after-school tutoring, or having an adult mentor, and to keep track of the degree to which individual students take part in each. Students themselves could periodically fill out a checklist showing estimated amounts of participation for the past several months, or well-informed staff could do so. After years, it may be hard to recall what a program component consisted of, so documentation of major segments can help, such as keeping records on the curriculum of a summer session, or having written expectations for volunteer mentors and a periodic note on whether these are met.

To track another possible key to students' progress, it could be helpful to take a quarterly note on the nature and extent of each family's participation in events and any evidence of changes in their more general involvement in a student's development and changing outlook.

Data on Outcomes

Programs aim to change disadvantaged students' views, their school performance, their postsecondary education plans and attainments, and their overall chances in life. Discovering whether any of these aims has been realized forms a tall order for data collection. Routine school records of grades and tests (school tests, standardized tests, and college entrance tests), as well as attendance and discipline records, can suggest the program's academic impact and a student's general commitment to school. In view of the wide skepticism about such traditional measures, we note that other kinds of evidence such as work samples and portfolios, though complex to gather consistently on sizable groups, offer even richer portraits of students' growth in skills. Even brief surveys of student goals, opinions, and plans, if done regularly and with consistent questions, could provide useful traces of other program effects. In the later high school years, progress in completing requirements and graduating should be tracked. Tracking dropouts will show whether they complete school elsewhere or take the general equivalency examinations. After students graduate, they can be surveyed annually by telephone or postcard to keep track of their higher education history, the type of schools attended and for how long, or jobs. The essential data concern students' achievements. Their attitudes and views, such as commonly gathered information on students' and parents' satisfaction with a program, are also important, but cannot substitute for outcome information. It would be of interest as well to discover any impact of these programs on other children in the family and on family dynamics, though each added topic increases data-collection burdens.

Comparison Group

Studies that do not put a program's results in context by showing how they differ from what otherwise would be expected yield little conclusive information. As one recent discussion of studies in higher education put it, "you can't fix by analysis what you bungled by design."[1] Comparison of the students in a tuition-guarantee program with similar students not involved offers a far more powerful conclusion that the program caused the differences observed.

[1]Richard J. Light, et al., By Design: Planning Research on Higher Education (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

The large advantages of a comparison-group design argue for spending time to plan for that from the beginning of a program, or as near the beginning as possible. At least one program we saw had already planned a comparison group, composed of those who were nominated but not selected. Since many programs choose students in some way (at random, selecting one of several classrooms in a school, or selecting individuals from a pool based on criteria), it should be possible to select a similar classroom or a second set of individuals from the same setting and keep track of those students over the same years as the program is at work. From addresses in school records verified at one point in time, a program could continually update records on the comparison-group students (for example, by a postcard survey every 6 months) so that the group could be located for data-gathering as needed. An incentive can help keep such a group in touch, such as offering a small money payment for each returned postcard.

Collecting data on nonparticipants is hard but essential work. School records may be available for some. Self-reports may be the only data available on others, but these are better than nothing.

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